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MEANINGFUL EXISTENCE AND THE CHRISTIAN HOPE

by

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PREFACE

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM, ARGUMENT, AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The minister should uncompromisingly and unapologetically affirm the afterlife. He should show the implications of life after death both for life and for death. Whether the parish minister confines hope to this world, or reinforces hope through a future outlook is a decision whose consequences affect everything which he has to say during his ministry. As a reckoning is implied in God's promise of life, the minister is obligated to tell parishioners that we are living under God's judgment. As divine love is implied in the hope for survival, the minister is obligated to tell parishioners that we are living under God's grace. Therefore, the minister must seriously ponder the cost of depriving worshipers of the essential content of the Christian faith: the hope for survival of death. This is the hope which brings comfort in life and in the presence of death. The minister cannot speak of a meaningful existence in God without the fulfillment which only the Christian hope affords.

I. THE PROBLEM

The topic. The topic is "Meaningful Existence and the Christian Hope." A definition of these terms will

serve as the basis for further investigation of the problem in its relation to the parish ministry.

Meaningful existence is purposeful existence which allows one to see point in suffering and adversity; to discern evidence of reasonable allowances for the exercise of human freedom and endeavor; to note worth and significance in each passing moment; and to experience profitable dedication to a goal which one senses to be intrinsically good. The term "meaningful existence," then, is interchangeable with the terms "fullness of meaning," "fulfilled meaning," "fullness of life," and "meaningful life."

The Christian hope expresses God's promise of present and future participation in eternal life to those who abide in His will. Eternal life is life which participates in God. It is the highest quality of life possible this side of the grave, and the fullness of joyful life beyond the grave. Both components are included in the Christian hope for life.

The question is, Is it possible to participate in meaningful existence without participating in the Christian hope? Are the two terms significant for each other? Can we speak of the fullness of meaning without the hope for survival?

The importance of the topic. In this non-psychological discussion of the question, the primary emphasis is on

the problem in its relation to the parish ministry. What can we ministers preach and teach with conviction? What can we say unapologetically during grief work? How can we speak to a generation for whom the God of our fathers is dead?

The pastor cannot afford to ignore the question, because his decision is literally a matter of life and death. Hence, it is a matter of pressing concern for the congregation. It is readily apparent that the parishioner's attitude toward life and death is greatly conditioned by the attitude of the minister. If the avenue to meaningful living runs only from the cradle to the grave, then the parishioner demands the formula which fills this time span with purposiveness. If the requirement of meaningful existence includes a life transcending the grave, then the parishioner justly demands that the speaker address himself to the afterlife and its bearing upon the present. In both instances, the worshiper is intensely concerned with life.

That man wants to live is an incontestable statement. That he wants to live meaningfully is the sole justification for the church, cathedral, or synagogue. If a formula for bettering or extending life is discovered, it can be assured of instant success. Perhaps congregations with a higher degree of sophistication than others are less

prone to display overt concern about death and what follows; but the minister knows from his experience during grief work that in the presence of death, men inevitably grasp for more life. The minister also knows that the assurance that something follows death strongly conditions life preceding death.

Many who dismiss with derision the prospects of an afterlife do so not out of a desire for oblivion, but out of a scepticism that the afterlife really exists. Theirs is not a joyful embracing of death, but a resigned acceptance of the inevitable. When poets speak of the friendliness, glory, blessedness, and comfort of death, they are almost universally speaking of death as a summons to a higher life. But is this higher life an actuality? And if it is, is it necessary to high life this side of death?

As the pastor cannot ignore these questions, he is led to consider his two primary options: he may resolve to concentrate only upon temporal existence, invoking God's help in guiding his flock through the troubles of everyday living, or he may seek to improve the quality of present life by bolstering hope through a future outlook.

If he chooses the first option, he will argue that as life is lived in the now, concern for life is necessarily restricted to now. The "one world at a time" philosophy of this option would induce a commitment to bringing order out of the chaos that perennially afflicts existence,

moment by moment. As the moment is of utmost concern, the solutions to the problems of that moment must all lie within the present. The future can and does take care of itself when wise decisions are made in the present. Hence, even if a futuristic supra-temporal existence is a reality, it does not figure conspicuously in the reckoning of the present moment. One busily engaged with the lives, loves, and frustrations of the present simply does not find the afterlife a matter of immediate and pressing concern.

A second consequence of this option concerns the limits of spiritual anguish. When the adversities associated with human suffering move the spirit to seek relief, the pastor enjoins the sufferer to call upon the sustaining power of his faith in God. No matter how intense the spiritual suffering, the sufferer may know that the pain may be lessened or overcome; he knows this through the example set by the Christ. The contest ultimately becomes one of inner pain versus inner faith. The triumph of the former gives one the experience of hell; the triumph of the latter ushers one into heaven. As heaven is life with God, as faith dictates that hell cannot prevail against God, the believer knows that inner spiritual pain may inevitably be overcome.

A third of the several avenues inherent in this option concerns the experience of death. The pastor may

assure the dying that because his life has been dedicated to God, his living has not been in vain. The testimonial to his life is the work which has survived him, or the children who preserve his identity, or the contributions which he has made to humanity. To those who survive the deceased, the pastor may say that the loved one enjoyed a useful and serviceable life, since it was a life oriented to God. Of course, when faced with the inability to say any of these things, or perhaps even when able to say them with integrity, the minister may elect the current approach of merely standing silent before the unyielding claim of death. This is the first option which presents itself.

The second option open to the pastor is in seeking to improve the quality of present life by reinforcing hope through a future outlook. One's view of present existence is overwhelmingly conditioned by the fact that it stands under the judgment of a future existence. An individual will see little point to striving in the present if death washes all away. A future calling-to-account not only supplies an objective reference for moral guidance, but also an overview which encompasses each passing moment. This is the "big picture" which often brings clarity to isolated instances.

Regarding the limits of spiritual anguish, the pastor recognizes the frailty of the human spirit, the

all-too-frequent lapses of an empowering faith, and the capacity of prolonged suffering to incapacitate both spirit and faith. For this reason, he points to God's tomorrow when man's today is intolerable. A realistic view of the human condition reveals that suffering is indeed a thing of the present; but realism also dictates that the present does not always present a solution or a periodic release from suffering. A future hope is the salvation. Not only does the future give hope for surcease of anguish, but it also enables the sufferer to embolden his natural will to survive by knowing that the future life will be brighter.

Concerning the experience of death, the pastor who affirms the afterlife comforts those who are dying in God that theirs is but a "crossing over" into true life. To those who survive them, he may say that their loved ones are now with God, and that they may seek reunion through abiding in the love of God. The pastor, in this instance, need not stand silent when others look to him for comfort. This is the minister's second option.

To place these two options in dialogue with each other should hopefully elicit courageous guidelines for the minister in his experiences of death, suffering, and the adversities of life. Such is the intent of this study. The following condensed argument will present the course of reasoning of the entire study and the conclusions which

are drawn. The method of procedure which follows the argument will show the progression of evidence in support of the conclusion.

II. THE ARGUMENT AND THE PROCEDURE

The argument. In the light of the stated definitions of meaningful existence and the Christian hope, the question concerns the dependence of the one upon the other: Can an individual experience the fullness of meaning without participating in the Christian hope for survival?

Certainly it is not begging the question to say that the fullness of meaning is of the essence, for there is a modicum of meaning or purpose present even in situations of despair. Few thinking individuals will describe any human condition as absolute. They will consider instead the tolerances of the situation. When human suffering exceeds the tolerances negotiable by an individual, that person may find life unbearable, wholly lacking meaning. On the other hand, when an individual is able to keep in due proportion the hardships and the joys of life, he may stand within the tolerances required for a fulfilled and meaningful life.

Whether the tolerances of meaningful existence include an authentic hope for survival of death is the primary concern of this paper.

The atheistic nihilist has confronted the wall of death and has concluded that its presence makes all of life meaningless. The acute problems of the justice of the universe and the suffering of man have led the nihilist to affirm that being has no meaning when all comes to nothing in the end. That existence is absurd is the logical inference to be drawn from the analysis of the human condition as lacking a future vindication for the apparent injustices and sufferings experienced by mortal men. The situation of wide-spread meaninglessness, as pictured in modern literature, reveals that meaninglessness is indeed a reality experienced by many.

But meaninglessness is never a tolerable situation. Modern psychotherapy substantiates the fact that man cannot live without purposiveness. Because this is so, other moderns, the atheistic humanists, have conceded that all comes to nothing in the end; but they have asserted that man can live meaningfully in spite of nihilating circumstances. They have felt that man may create his own values in the absence of an objective meaning, and in the presence of a hostile cosmos and death. In essence, the humanist has accepted the analysis of the nihilist, but has rejected his conclusion.

Yet is this a real option? Can one find meaning in a situation which is avowedly meaningless? Aside from

miraculous intervention, can one find hope in a hopeless situation? Are not the two mutually exclusive? The humanist would say No. He would answer that man's will can point the way to meaningful existence through an acceptance of despair and isolation from reality. The error in this thinking is that acceptance of despair breeds servile acceptance of defeat. Perpetual defeat destroys not only the human will, but any meaning which it might induce. As despair breeds further despair, a negative self-feeding mechanism ultimately destroys whatever meaning the humanist thinks he has grasped. This approach to meaning is categorically rejected.

Another approach to meaningful existence has been that of the Christian existentialist. He too has looked at the wall of death, has confirmed it in its reality, and has sought a way out of the dilemma which it excites. Whereas the nihilist folds his hands in abject submission, whereas the humanist seeks to transcend its physical and psychological limitations through his will, the Christian existentialist calls upon the help of God. He seeks meaningful existence through belief in God but without a hope for survival. For instance, one school of thought maintains that every moment of existence is meaningful when a man seizes it as an opportunity to make a decision for the obedience demanded by Jesus. The failure of this

argument is that the moment is hallowed only if it is seen in the totality of all moments, of God's eternal time. What is required is some assurance that both the moments of experience and the persons who experience them endure beyond the transitoriness of mere suffering and death.

Another school of existential thinking states that man can find meaning in the new existence brought by the Christ. This is true, but doesn't the new existence include the resurrection of Christ? And doesn't the resurrection of Christ give the hope that new life vindicates the old and gives it meaning? Can man live meaningfully, even under God, when his existence is plagued with the shadow of death? Isn't life meaningful only when death is but the gateway to more and better life? The answer of the Christian existentialists, too, fails to satisfy.

Then what does satisfy? The answer to this question delineates the central affirmation of this paper: meaningful existence is dependent upon participation in the Christian hope for life after death. Meaningful existence is purposeful orientation to eternal values, when seen in the light of the afterlife. Purposeful orientation implies the dedication of one's being to the attainment of a specific goal. The goal, if it is to satisfy, must include the values which are eternal, the values which are intrinsically good. As only God is eternal, as only God defines the good, meaningful existence is possible only

through participation in God. Participation in God gives the hope that life and love continue in God beyond the grave.

Of course, the critics who deny life after death as an actuality must be heard; the potent argument against a psychological dualism in man will be considered, as will the argument that future concern deemphasizes the present dimension of life. These theses will be contested through argumentation utilizing such principles as Kant's categorical imperative to seek morality; the church's historic teaching concerning the future life; the wide-spread and almost instinctive yearning of man for joy after death; the revelation of God through Christ: "I came that they may have life" (Jn. 10:10); "Because I live, you will live also" (Jn. 14:19). These intimations concerning the afterlife shall indicate that the hope for continued life is far more than wishful thinking.

Finally, the relevance of the foregoing to the parish ministry is considered. A recurring theme in this study is, What can the minister say with conviction to give hope and meaning to life? If the analysis proceeds as intended, the conclusion will lead the minister to revitalize the greatly diminished hope for life, and to show that temporal existence in God is meaningful, because this life stands under another life which transcends it

and hallows it.

The procedure. If meaninglessness is a reality, then it presents itself as a real consideration in the analysis of meaningful existence. That is, many people are convinced that life lacks an objective meaning, and that no amount of creativity or divinity can alter this situation. If this is demonstrably true, then further talk of "meaning" is decidedly meaningless. Therefore, Chapter II will start with a portrayal of the nihilistic atheistic views of such men as Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Genet, Pinter, and Kafka. The questions are: Is meaninglessness a real problem? Is the nihilist justified in his views? Does life after death pose an alternative to these views?

In contrast to this negative affirmation of meaninglessness, Chapter III examines positive approaches to meaning through despair. Following Frankl's demonstration that man cannot live without meaning, the humanistic atheistic views of Camus, Russell, and Percy provide background for the following questions: Can meaning be found in spite of the collapse of objective meaning? Is there a possibility of experiencing the fullness of meaning through the acceptance of despair? Through man's movement toward progress? Through flight from reality? If not, can the afterlife fill the void?

Because of the demonstrated inadequacies of the views of the nihilistic atheist and the humanistic atheist, Chapter IV considers the possibility of meaning in God, but apart from a future hope. Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich are utilized as representative Christian existentialists, and William Ernest Hocking will aid in the rebuttal of their points of view. The essential question will be: Can meaning be found through belief in God but without a hope for survival? If not, then the burden of this study will be to show the failure of the Christian existentialists and how the future hope transcends these shortcomings.

Because of the inadequacies of the foregoing approaches to meaningful existence, Chapter V moves to a consideration of what is presented as the authentic Christian view: meaning in God with a future hope. Adequate argumentation is presented here against the opposition of such thinkers as Corliss Lamont, who denies the existence of an afterlife. A further concern is to answer the critics who feel that concern for the future is detrimental to concern for the present. Following this comes the weight of evidence to show the justification for hoping, for believing in an afterlife. The last requirement is for a demonstration that the afterlife is desirable, transcending the tediousness of temporal

existence.

In conclusion, Chapter VI will be concerned with the application of the propositional statement to the parish ministry. What is set forth is a systematic stripping away of all options save that of a future hope; then, when that is accomplished, the remaining option, if it be shown to be validly grounded in Scripture and in reason, will present itself as the only option open to the minister during grief work.

In summary, the progression is from an experience of total meaninglessness; to a proposed degree of meaning through acquiescence to the lot of man; to an allegedly higher meaning which is grounded in God; to the highest meaning, which is a grounding in God that is inclusive of a hope for survival of death. The conclusions are then applied to the operational field. This is the intent and scope of the investigation.

CHAPTER II

MEANINGLESSNESS

A significant segment of the world's populace would witness that purposeful orientation and eternal life are not the pathway to meaningful existence. The reasoning is that human existence is devoid of meaning, and that no approach will give to life a meaning which it lacks. This reasoning is described as significant not only because of the intellectual respectability of its proponents, but because it is antithetical to the thesis of this study. Therefore, this portion of the problem will be concerned with the propositional statement that life has no meaning.

A sampling of modern literature and drama will be used as the sources for presenting the nihilistic views of meaninglessness. Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Pinter, Genet, and Kafka are utilized as representatives of the several points of view. An analysis of the conditions prompting these views is drawn from Elmen and Vahanian. The evaluation which concludes this chapter shall attempt a rebuttal of these viewpoints and a further affirmation of fulfilled meaning through God's promise of life.

I. THE ABSURDITY OF EXISTENCE

Nathan A. Scott, Jr. feels that the human

predicament reveals itself in existential terms of contingency and anxiety, guilt and suffering, love and despair, isolation and death.¹ The problem has been grappled with by the minds of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Bergson and Max Scheler, Chestov and Unamuno, Heidegger and Sartre, Berdyaev and Barth, Tillich and Niebuhr. Yet, in the opinion of Scott, the modern writer alone has plumbed deeply the problem of self-knowledge. He has concluded that self-recognition is achieved only by a tragic view of life, "by the acceptance of existence as separation, as isolation and estrangement."² Man, therefore, is to be interpreted in categories of alienation, estrangement, or spiritual isolation.

An excellent sampling of the emptiness portrayed by much of our modern literature is provided by Martin Esslin in his review of the latest endeavor to portray man's predicament--the Theatre of the Absurd.³ The Theatre of the Absurd is not a self-conscious body, but a group of writers, each exercising an individual approach to the attitude represented in our time. This heterogeneous group conceives of moderns as living in a period in which the

¹See Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Rehearsals of Discomposure (New York: King's Crown Press, 1952).

²Ibid., p. 2.

³See Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday, 1961).

certainities of an earlier time have all "been tested and found wanting." Dramatists of the Absurd are found in every corner of the world; surprisingly, however, the United States has produced few. Esslin feels that the draining away of the sense of meaning and purpose has not occurred in the United States because this country has not experienced the ravages of war. It still cherishes the dream of the good life.⁴

This condition of creeping decadence was present earlier than the manifestation of it by the inhumanity of the Second World War; but the decadence was concealed by "the substitute religions of faith in progress, nationalism, and various totalitarian fallacies."⁵ The war transposed human existence into categories of meaninglessness and shattered beliefs. The Absurd, then, refers not so much to the ridiculous, as to the loss of purpose. Unlike their predecessors in the Existential theatre--Camus, Sartre, Giraudoux--these writers seek an approach to the irrationality of the human condition not through reason, but through the deliberate abandonment of the same. The sense of the senseless is the desired effect. This is achieved by merely presenting the senseless, not by speculating about it.

⁴Ibid., p. 225.

⁵Ibid., pp. xviii-xix.

A study of the themes basic to those who portray the absurd reveals at least four difficulties which they believe level everything to absurdity: time, lack of communication, imprisonment by circumstances, and estrangement from reality. Each theme is present to some degree in all of the writers; but the unmistakable leaning toward a specific theme allows the categorizing of the separate authors.

Time. The search for the self is self-defeating in the purposeless activity inherent in the flow of time. Samuel Beckett struggles with the question of identity. "Who am I?" in the flux occasioned by time? Identity becomes lost as time levels everything to absurdity. Perhaps Godot shall put an end to impermanence and give meaning to existence and to the self. Waiting for Godot⁶ is Beckett's most celebrated play. Its wide-spread acclaim, in spite of its total disregard for orthodoxy, is proof of the potency of its message: it ignores dramatic construction, choosing to work with attitudes, not with characters. Yet it has been translated into more than twenty languages, performed in all parts of the world, and heralded as one of the greatest productions of the post-war theatre. There is no "meaning" to the play. It is derived from the author's

⁶Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (New York: Grove Press, 1954).

intuition and perceived by the imagination of the viewer. The subject of the play is not Godot, but waiting. Each viewer may draw upon his own experience to interpret the absurdity pictured on the stage. Regardless of the richness or poverty of his background, Beckett knows that the viewer will recognize the familiar pattern of waiting, hope, and despair.

The foolishness of hope, the futility of existence is the theme of Waiting for Godot. Beckett pictures the despair of Estragon and Vladimir who are anxiously awaiting Godot (deliverance? understanding? God?). They huddle together, though they are personally repulsive to each other. Fearsome and in doubt that Godot will arrive, their need for each other gives comfort in doubt. To pass the interminable time, they try to commit suicide, they try abusing each other, they try exercising. The boredom proceeds so relentlessly that Vladimir demands of his companion, "say 'we are happy.'"

They have surrendered all rights, even the right to laugh, while waiting on Godot. However, they are not certain what he looks like; they even confuse the evil Pozzo with the expected one. Pozzo's description of the world as "this bitch of an earth" does not dismay the duo. They already realize this, but salvation comes with Godot, who comes with the night. Yet these pious, deceived, what-nots are able to find even the cruel and sadistic

Pozzo agreeable. (He has thrown them some bones and has explained to them the nature of the impending twilight--it is deceitful.) Pozzo (injustice, fate, life) demonstrates that life must deal brutally with Lucky (man), whom Pozzo drags about on a rope. This is the only way Lucky will have it. Lucky is commanded to speak once. When he does, he mouths an incomprehensible claptrap of religious dogma liberally dispersed with the refrain--time will tell. Pozzo abruptly ends this "foolishness" of thinking by jerking the rope.

The two are again visited during their vigil. This time by a boy who tells them that he works for Mr. Godot, and that Mr. Godot will not appear tonight, but tomorrow night. The boy's description of his employer reveals that Mr. Godot does not beat him, because he minds the goats; but he beats the boy's brother: "He minds the sheep." (Here the ancient suffering of the righteous of Job.)

Once more Pozzo (now blind) reenters with the still-enslaved Lucky (now on a shortened rope). Even in the midst of this miserable company, Vladimir rejoices that "we are not alone, waiting for Godot . . ." Pozzo continually falls, taking Lucky down with him. (Blind fate. Chained man.) When the two attempt to help Pozzo, they also fall in a heap. They ask Pozzo and Lucky how they manage when no one is around to help, and Pozzo replies, "We wait till we can get up. Then we go on."

Blind fate controlling fool man exit stage left.

The climax comes when the boy reappears to announce yet another postponement from Mr. Godot. Still seeking more information concerning the boy's master, the heroes inquire of the lad, "What does Mr. Godot do?" The boy replies with alarming candor, "He does nothing, Sir."

Now despairingly uncertain in the promise that Godot comes tomorrow, Estragon and Vladimir are at least "certain" that tomorrow they will surely hang themselves.

In this instance, the impassiveness of God in the midst of suffering has outlet only in despair. The boredom occasioned by the loss of a dependable reference destroys all meaning. Time hangs so heavily that the traditional teaching of a God who cares, whose presence eventuates in meaning, is set aside by the harsh, evil God who gnostics averred established creation. The relentless movement of time levels all to absurdity.

Lack of communication. While Beckett portrays the despair of waiting, Arthur Adamov deals with the despair of communication. Even (and especially) the word God no longer has meaning. Its use constitutes a refusal to think. Therefore, instead of trying to represent the world, Adamov seeks to parody it.⁷ Parody eliminates

⁷Adamov presently disclaims the Theatre of the Absurd for epic realism.

subtleties and moves to harsh, direct gestures. L'Invasion is a play showing the hopelessness of the search for meaning. Language breaks down so completely that the hero, who might have known bliss, retires to a death of resigned despair. Agnes, who would have ushered him into this bliss, returns to him from her unfaithfulness. But she is not admitted to his presence because the hero's mother takes literally her pretense of coming "to borrow the typewriter." Hence, the mother fails to call her son, even then engaged in the act of suicide upstairs. His senseless death makes his life absurd.

That death ends existence, no matter what you do, is the theme of La Parodie and Le Ping-Pong. Human endeavor is futile when directed toward ambition, ideology, or the pursuit of the elusive meaning of life. That two men could so completely devote themselves to a machine (Le Ping-Pong) is a theme so ridiculous that the mere reading appears idiotic. Esslin feels that the play must be witnessed that one might catch the intensity with which the machine (wealth and power) is revered by the worshipers.

Eugene Ionesco agrees that words are meaningless, that communication is impossible. Ionesco, therefore, tries to show reality in the new dimension of symbol and myth. As such, he participates in the anti-theatre as an anti-realist. Imagery is seen at its best in one of his

greatest achievements, The Chairs. Two old people entertain numerous guests who never arrive in a lonely circular tower on an island. They continually place chairs until the environment becomes saturated with non-existent bodies. The old man wishes to pass on his lifelong experience to his guests via an orator. When he is assured that the orator will comply with his wishes, both he and his wife leap from the window. The orator faces the empty chairs and emits a gurgling sound that reveals that he is deaf and dumb.

Ionesco admits that the emphasis is not upon the message, nor the people, nor any entity save the chairs.⁸ They represent the absence of people, the emperor, God, matter, metaphysical emptiness. The central theme is nothingness, the invisible elements that speak not, but are eloquent in their silence.

Like Ionesco, Harold Pinter fuses farce and tragedy. One revels in the humor of the human situation up to the point of horror. This point marks the onset of tragedy, which Pinter seeks to demonstrate. His method is to point up what he calls the "evasion of communication,"⁹ rather than the inability to communicate. He utilizes the medium of real-life idiom to reveal the absurdity of

⁸ Esslin, op. cit., p. 100.

⁹ Ibid., p. 207.

the human condition. The lowest expressions of the lowest class are made to sound poetic. On the other hand, N. S. Simpson deals with the suburbanite. One Way Pendulum shows the diffuse existence of each member of a typical suburban family. Each is so wrapped up in himself that each might be on a separate planet. The inroads of habit and social convention are so deeply embedded that Kirby, in order to find justification for liking to wear black, becomes a mass murderer. Here is inauthentic society at its worst.

Imprisonment by circumstances. The works of Jean Genet show the despair and loneliness of man entrapped in a maze of mirrors. He is aware of his own distorted reflections on every hand; he is equally aware of the others who mock his efforts to disentangle himself and emerge to freedom. Ultimately, he must realize the futility of all effort. He is lost in the reflections of his own image. Reality is an unattainable goal.

The problem of liberty is also the concern of Manuel de Pedrolo (Homes i No). Man is imprisoned in an infinite number of enclosures. Breaking down one barrier, (superstition, for instance), only subjects him to another, (death, for instance). We are compelled to continue the struggle, though we know in advance that only more barriers fill the future. The great surprise of the play

comes when the players tear down the curtain which hopefully leads to freedom, only to find themselves confronted with a succession of iron bar barriers. No less is the surprise to discover that their jailer is similarly incarcerated.

Estrangement from reality. Though not a member of the Theatre of the Absurd, Franz Kafka so skillfully employs symbolism to portray the absurd that his inclusion here is almost mandatory. It is fairly certain that he would be included in the Theatre proper, had he survived his bout with tuberculosis in 1924.

The sense of cosmic exile is the special province of Kafka, a metaphysical or religious writer. Born in Prague (1883), he never completely disencumbered himself from the childhood frustrations cast upon him by an authoritarian father and a compliant mother. The estrangement between his father and himself was intensified by an "inability to rebel, and an unwillingness to submit." Further, the picture of his father was drawn from his religious conception of God (instead of the reversal which Freud would find more normative). The resulting guilt in being unable to identify with the disciplined Philistine of a father made the life of Kafka one of intense loneliness.

The carry-over to his writings is apparent. The

disparity between man and God first comes into focus in the disparity between man and the social matrix. The theme of all of Kafka's work (as illustrated by Scott) is the tragedy of autonomous man as he becomes insecure in his autonomy. Man is held between two worlds: by an earthly chain which is long enough to give him freedom of earthly space, yet which arrests him when he reaches out for earth. Kafka's human situation is described by Scott as a depth of distress.¹⁰ Man thus lives in an ambiguous state of crisis at the juncture between nature and spirit. Certainly this theme is present in the two well-known works, "The Castle" and "The Trial." The castle (the ground of existence) and the town (existence) are separated by a seemingly unbridgeable gulf. The castle continually recedes, even as the hero (K.) seemingly draws nearer. K. is ever frustrated in his attempts to reach it; the inference is that thinking man will ultimately despair of reaching the goal.

In "The Trial" Joseph K. has a knife plunged into his back with great ceremony, following the termination of the inquiry into the meaning of his life. When his whole existence was called into question, he was found wanting. His easy conscience had cost him his integrity. He had remained man unfulfilled. Within the prescribed

¹⁰ Scott, op. cit., p. 42.

limits of his freedom, man is obliged to achieve. A hostile cosmos demands achievement, yet restricts the movement necessary to it. To lag in the pursuit is to be destroyed by the very forces to which one submits. In the final analysis, all is cast into meaninglessness.

So the portrayal of the absurd represents one of the attempts to find ample replacement for God. Since Nietzsche's affirmation that God is dead, man has experienced himself as caught without an objective reference to give him concrete rules of conduct. The existential theatre of Sartre and Camus would have man assume the responsibility for creating himself. The Theatre of the Absurd and Kafka would have man face up to the fact that there is no choice between a meaningful existence in God and an evil existence without God. One is surrounded by impenetrable darkness. Acceptance of this anxiety and despair can partly help one survive it. Those who portray the absurd aim at shock therapy also to restore meaning to words, rather than have words conceal meanings. The mere recognition that present communication is meaningless can be therapeutic.

Esslin concludes his fine presentation on a very strange note of hope in a situation which portrays hopelessness: he feels that the depicting of the absurd does not reflect despair or a primitive return to subservience under the inexplicable in nature. He thinks that it

"expresses modern man's endeavor to come to terms with the world in which we live."¹¹

We might add, "and to do so without God."

II. ANALYSIS OF THE ABSURD

Paul Elmen, writing for the Christian Faith Series,¹² demonstrates through literature and everyday life the emptiness of the man of action. He contributes the previously mentioned difficulties to a boredom which makes existence appear meaningless. Contemporary man with his round of activities is seeking to escape the aloneness, the "boredom" of his existence.

Boredom is the failure to find meaning and value in life. The realization that all is lost leads to "horror." This horror is so frightening to man that his busyness becomes but vain striving to avoid boredom. His ultimate hope for the restoration of meaning to his life is in the "glory," the nearness of God.

Boredom consists of nothingness. It is the result of insisting that there is no reality beyond the surface phenomenon.¹³ We may tidy up the world, but it quickly

¹¹Ibid., p. 316.

¹²Paul Elmen, The Restoration of Meaning to Contemporary Life (New York: Doubleday, 1958).

¹³Ibid., p. 16.

falls into shambles. Without the supersensible dimension, it becomes a weight that is very great to bear. The contented yawn merely represents an acceptance of the commonplace in life; but the boredom occasioned by a lack of interest, that in which the subject is both corrupted and corrupting, pushes all concerned toward the point where nothing at all matters.

The corruption of ennui causes a paralysis of the will and a failure to cope with life.¹⁴ This is what Plutarch, or Lucian, would describe as death in the midst of life. The ennui which does not recognize itself as such is devastating in its effects. "The man who is deeply bored and does not know it has lost his humanity."¹⁵ His resignation to monotony has become so great that he knows neither hope nor despair. Escape is sought but seldom found in the satisfaction of the pleasures of the body; in the pursuit of power; in alcohol or drugs; in the flight to fancy; in small talk, the "repartee of the damned"--when the neighbor inquires with banality, "Is it hot enough for you?" there is only one authentic reply: "All is lost."¹⁶

This "lostness" typifies a generation which has deemphasized man's grounding in God. It has led Gabriel

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Vahanian, among many others, to conclude that ours is a post-Christian era. "Ours is the first attempt in recorded history to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead."¹⁷ In the opinion of Vahanian, the period between the two wars was an anti-Christian period. Under the influence of Nietzsche and his disciples, men actually wrestled with the existence of God. We now live in neither an anti-Christian culture nor a non-Christian culture; ours is a post-Christian culture where God is of but little significance. We face the possibility and practicability of building a culture on atheism. Men have reacted against a God who was so close that he stifled them; they have rejected radical immanentism by killing God.¹⁸ Vahanian capsules the problem: Kierkegaard dealt with the problem of becoming a Christian, Nietzsche dealt with the problem of becoming a man. For Kierkegaard, Christianity is dead; for Nietzsche, God is dead. No ladder leads from man to God; man must solve his own problems.¹⁹

Vahanian continues, only a living transcendent God allows man to live. The question ultimately becomes one of man's existence, not God's. Only a living God can say:

¹⁷Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God (New York: George Braziller, 1961), p. xiii. By the death of God, the author means the rejection of the Biblical notion of Deity. See p. xxvi.

¹⁸Ibid., p. xxi.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 209-10.

Let man be. Vahanian feels that perhaps the only hope for reviving the living God of freedom is for society to utilize its freedom independently of some nostalgic God of a "Christian culture." It is better to live in an age where the mummy of God has disappeared than to live in an age "stained with a little religiosity."²⁰ Our age may still be religious, but it is decidedly post-Christian.

Vahanian traces the movement toward religiosity--the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, the "faith in anything" appeal to the masses--to the temporalizing of millennial expectations and the Social Gospel movement of the nineteenth century. Regarding the latter, men had the effrontery to view Americans as God's chosen people; they had not profited from Israel's lesson that God does the selecting, not man. Following the lead of Martin E. Marty in analyzing the current revival of religious interest, Vahanian compares this revival with the Great Awakening of the 1750's. He agrees with Robert Ellis Thompson, 1895, that the Great Awakening masked the transition from an emphasis on the sovereignty of God to one on the perfectibility of man, and progress. The revival of the 1950's was the religious inauguration of the post-Christian era.²¹

²⁰Ibid., p. xxviii.

²¹Ibid., p. 203.

The conclusion drawn by Vahanian is that for all its ills, the recent turn to religion in America proves that religion and secularity cannot be separate. Indeed, in the Bible they are not separate from each other, only distinguished. Protestantism calls for secularity, but it does not call for secularism. The first is the religious realm, the temporal as contrasted to the divine; the second is the religious attitude, the present as given the attributes of the eternal.²² If life is meaningless, then there must be no God. "If God does not exist, everything is permissible."²³ But as Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov demonstrates, the fact that all is not permissible (murder, for instance), proves that God does exist. The logical consistency of the argument is its own undoing.

III. EVALUATION

Viewed on an objective basis, is the nihilist justified in his despair? Yes--if his analysis of the human predicament is correct. If belief in God is impossible, if hope for the future is fiction, if all is lacking in purpose, then meaninglessness is the only logical avenue left to reason. The confused person is the one who thinks meaning can come in these terms. If we

²² Ibid., pp. 60-66.

²³ Ibid., p. 106.

accept the view of life posed by the nihilist, then we are logically forced to accept his conclusion.

But is his view inclusive enough? Is man justified in equating suffering and evil? Whereas evil historically leads to negation, alienation, and despair, does suffering necessarily lead to the same? Can the nihilist's experience of meaninglessness point to meaning? Is it possible to hallow suffering?

If the nihilist is to see any meaning in life, then his first step is to place evil and suffering in the correct cause-effect relationship. Suffering is caused by evil. Suffering is not evil of itself. Neither entity can be rationally grasped, for to inquire beyond a certain point concerning the source of either is fruitless. Evil destroys being. This is so because the nature of evil is destructive. It is the aftermath of evil which is suffering. The impoverished son of an imprudent father carries the cross fashioned by his unwise elder. One cannot with complete justification locate the entire cause of the son's suffering in the father, for perhaps the father himself was a victim of circumstances and evil; but as he participates in evil, the father must bear his portion of the blame for his son's suffering.

As evil is destructive not only of others, but of itself, it inevitably leads to despair; that is, a sealed fate is a cause for despair, and evil ultimately realizes

that its fate is sealed. (Again, the nihilist is seen to be justified if his view of man's subjugation to evil is accepted.) But the suffering which is caused by evil may exercise an option not open to evil--it may deviate from destructiveness, even as a cross may press one into the ground, or force one to call upon a hidden reserve of strength. Suffering is inevitable, but a negative reaction to suffering is not. A person may react positively by calling upon that divine spiritual strength which accompanies his faith. The primary emphasis in summoning his spiritual transcendence is neither to understand suffering, nor to justify suffering, but to survive suffering.

If the nihilist were to react to adverse suffering by calling upon God's Spirit, he would understand that suffering affords an opportunity to draw even closer to God, the Utter Reality. This is the reality for which he yearns. How else could spiritual transcendence be called forth if suffering did not exist? Thus, the nihilist's experience of meaninglessness may point the way to ultimate meaning, if the nihilist were only to accept God's holy Presence. Calling upon God is calling upon strength.

Negativity cannot produce the self-confidence one requires to activate that portion of the human spirit which reaches out to accept the Holy Spirit. Disillusionment cannot see beyond the immediacy of present suffering to the

higher ideal to which the suffering points. If the present is made the all, the sufferer is robbed of the point of the suffering. Who endures with patience the race to death? Death is negativity. It makes pointless a lifetime of anguish. Death is disillusioning. It destroys whatever optimism one may cherish regarding a purposeful deity. Unless life after death projects an additional factor into the human equation, when suffering exceeds the limits of human endurance, the sufferer must surely realize that the cross is but another description of meaninglessness.

Perhaps Vahanian and Elmen are correct: modern man's present conception of deity is in dire need of an overhauling. Who is to say that Elmen's analysis of the boredom afflicting modern man is not connected with a dated conception of God?

Yet the promise of life is seldom a tune which becomes nauseating with excessive promulgation. The promise is as modern and as understandable as the individual's desire for self-preservation. Its modernity and relevance are noted in the answers to the views of those who portray the absurd:

When Beckett states that time levels all to abject absurdity, he is not properly speaking of time, but timelessness. Time is filled with change, variety, action, and purposeful movement. Timelessness is characterized by inertness, lack of variety and action and purposiveness.

The heroes of Waiting for Godot are immersed in timelessness. It is this deceptive timelessness which denies that conditions will improve. It is not time, for time means progression, or possibly retrogression, but hardly a standing still. To speak of having time on one's hands, or of "killing" time, is to speak of timelessness.

God promises His time, eternity, and not the Greek timelessness. To participate in God's time is to have a never-ending purposeful orientation to permanent values.

When Adamov, Ionesco, and Pinter state that lack of communication levels all to absurdity, they are merely stating the symptom, not the disease. The lack of communication indicates a loss of spiritual rapport. When one is sure that death presents a blank wall, he either suffers the ravages of despair, (as in the Theatre of the Absurd); or he musters a humanistic courage, (as in the Existential Theatre depicted in the following chapter); or he confines the bliss of worship to temporality, (as with the Christian Existentialists presented later).

In despairing before the wall of death, one simply has nothing to communicate about. What does one talk about on death row? Anything which will relieve the terrible strain of thinking about what lies behind the green door. "Anything" in conversation is usually "nothing." Witness the conversations of those incurably ill and seeking to give death a smiling face. Witness the conversations of

those spiritually dead and addicted to cocktail parties and a life devoid of challenges.

The things most worthy of communication are the things of spiritual value. The things of spiritual value are the things which endure--which endure permanently. To cut off communication with God before death and at death is to cut off communication with man during life: God is the source of meaningful values, because God is the source of life. If there is no God, then there is neither meaning nor life. If there is neither meaning nor life, what is there to talk about? If there is a God, He is the God of life, eternal life; and this is something to shout about.

When Genet states that imprisonment by circumstances levels all to absurdity, he is overlooking the Puritan emphasis on the life lived as a pilgrimage, a battleground. Even Jesus was not tempted to remain in the serenity of a transfigured existence atop the mountain, but was led to seek His destiny in the valley of the shadow of death below. Circumstances are often adverse in the valley of tears, but they are not inherently value-destroying. The most extreme case may look to the memory of mountain top experiences which occasionally come to every man. These experiences are supremely God's way of inspiring and instilling with courage for the hard days ahead. The worst imprisonment is not the externally imposed condition of adversity, but

the self-imposed confines of death. No man need die under the weight of circumstances; no man need have his spirit imprisoned by them. When despairing sets in, if he cannot find God in the present, he need only look to the future.

Kafka, in picturing estrangement from reality as that which levels all to absurdity, again is stating the symptom, not the cause. He is right, of course. But what is reality? It is God. All else is disappointing. Many moderns have refused to accept the starting premise, God. Any other "reality" is subject to the shortcomings of finite existence. It is these shortcomings which bring disappointment and the experience of a lack of dependability and purposiveness in the universe. Man's action in separating himself from the very thing he craves is self-contradictory: he wants reality, but refuses God; he wants life, but refuses the afterlife; he wants the cessation of estrangement, but refuses alliance. It is the afterlife which secures one from estrangement--forevermore.

Indeed, the nihilist cannot derive meaning from a meaningless situation. This conclusion is in perfect accord with the thesis of this study. Even linguistically, meaninglessness implies the absence of meaning. But we have said that the nihilist's "experience" of meaninglessness can point him to God; that is, if he looks beyond the reality of suffering to the reality which is God, he may

find that his suffering is but an avenue to introduce him to true meaning. Despair is truly a tragic doorway to God, but this doorway results in part from the despairing man's insistence upon a too-tragic view of life. A less tragic view presents other avenues. Faith in God is not necessarily initiated through our spirits being dragged through the mire. True faith allows us to see God's workings oftentimes in the very presence of suffering.

An individual who convinces himself that tomorrow will not come is hardly the picture of exuberance, optimism, and hope. Therefore, the nihilist is displaying uncommonly good sense when he reacts in accordance with what he senses to be the requirements of the situation. But convince the despairing person that tomorrow is not only promised but also allows him hope for change, and he realizes that his former outlook was only his outlook: there is no actual and objective meaninglessness, but only what is "experienced" as such.

Of course, almost everyone experiences moments of apparent meaninglessness. The cry of dereliction and the agony in Gethsemane reveal that the prototype of meaningful existence was not exempt from spiritual anguish. Yet we should be missing an essential point of the Scriptural narratives if we failed to see that God, in His own time, vindicated the suffering of Jesus. This was the action of the resurrection.

On His part, Jesus willed to rely upon God's will throughout His ministry. In the light of this objective reliance, no apology is required for subjective frailty before suffering. What is of utmost importance is the inner conviction that God, in His own time, makes things right. God's time is intimate with the future time.

This is not a call to apathy on the part of man, nor a psychological sedative to temporarily lessen the pain. God's promise of the future is intended as a spiritual antibiotic to combat the infectious disease of sorrow. When injected into the spirit of man, the future hope dispenses a courage that dispels any doubt concerning the eventual triumph over adversity. The knowledge of the inevitable triumph gives meaning to life. The nihilist has shown the dire consequences of life without this knowledge.

* * *

It is necessary for man to believe that his life has purpose. It is crucial that he believes that adversity is not the final word. Man cannot live meaningfully in a world of total negation. He cannot live as a pilgrimage a life encompassed by nihilating circumstances. Lacking evidence of a friendly universe, he can find neither courage, nor hope, nor the fullness of life.

The investigation now turns to the certification that man cannot live without meaning, and the resulting

attempt by the atheistic humanist to impose meaning without the objective reference that is God.

CHAPTER III

MEANING IN SPITE OF OBJECTIVE MEANINGLESSNESS

The atheistic nihilist has experienced despair in the face of the apparent meaninglessness he senses in a hostile universe. Viktor Frankl is able to tell him why he despairs: man cannot live without meaning. The need is for a self-actualization which leads to a self-transcendence of all limiting circumstances. That Frankl fails to show how the need is met is discussed in the evaluation concluding this chapter. The atheistic humanist feels that the need is met through one of several channels: through the acceptance of despair, the approach of such men as Albert Camus and Walker Percy; through progress through intellect to creativeness, the method advocated by Bertrand Russell; through sex, the approach utilized by D. H. Lawrence. The evaluation shall reveal the inadequacies of these views, and the impossibility of enjoying the fullness of meaning without a purposeful orientation to God and the implied promise of God's future. Such an orientation would also reveal that the universe is not lacking in patterns of meaning.

I. MAN'S NEED FOR MEANINGFUL EXISTENCE

The existential vacuum. Modern man's present lack

of meaning is the central concern of Viktor Frankl. He has described this lack of meaning as the "existential vacuum."¹ It is particularly prominent in this century because of (1) the loss of instinct, occasioned by man's progression from the animal stage; and (2) the loss of tradition, occasioned by a break with the past.² Formerly, the first told man what he has to do. The second, what he ought to do. Presently, he is at a loss as to what he wants to do, and increasingly turns to others for direction. Conformism becomes his master. The existential vacuum is a form of nihilism, since nihilism contends that being has no meaning. Frankl deftly moves to the heart of the issue: man is not commanded to endure meaninglessness of life (as some existentialists teach); but "to bear his incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms."³

Frankl traces the roots of certain neuroses (the noogenic neuroses) to the inability to find meaning in existence. When the will-to-meaning becomes frustrated, neurosis sets in.⁴ Existential analysis, in the form of Logotherapy, seeks to focus attention upon the individual's

¹Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), p. 168.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 188.

⁴Ibid., p. xi. From the preface by Gordon W. Allport, professor of psychology at Harvard University.

groping for a higher meaning in life. Further, Frankl's conclusion concerning the origin of the existential vacuum was drawn from three gruesome years spent in Nazi prisons. Frankl, the Austrian psychiatrist now hailed as the successor to Freud, experienced reduction to "naked existence" under the deprivation of hope. Along with millions of others, he was made to subsist on a diet of ten and one-half ounces of bread per day and one and three-fourth pints of thin soup.⁵ Bodies became so emaciated that they began to devour themselves, as the organism digested its own proteins. The emotional vacuum was equally apparent. Apathy became a protective shell; the abnormal reaction to the continual abnormal threat of violent death became in itself normal. The spiritual pain of insult, of having one's life judged as useless, became intolerable without some show of indignation.

Frankl narrates how inmates were methodically being deprived of meaningful existence in a setting which made an art of torture. The ancient problem of suffering was again pushing man to the brink of despair. It forced the reflective to the conclusion that the size of human suffering is absolutely relative; for like a gas, suffering tends to spread throughout, no matter how large the container or how little the volume of gas.⁶ Frankl became convinced

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Ibid., p. 70.

that the search for meaning in the midst of suffering, in the midst of life, constitutes man's primary motivational force. So intense is man's need for meaningful existence that it has given rise to Frankl's science of Logotherapy. Logotherapy, the will to meaning, is aptly called "The Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy,"⁷ following Freud's will to pleasure and Adler's will to power.

Logotherapy. As man cannot live in a situation of despair, the pressing requirement is for a new focus in life. The preliminary step, of course, is a defocusing from the despairing predicament. Defocusing is the process by which Logotherapy shifts the patient's center of concern away from his disrupted center to something external to himself. Frankl's defocusing allows the patient to transcend his own predicament and to create a new dimension--the human dimension. Even when deprived of the things which normally give meaning to life (love, for instance), the individual may find meaning. In spite of inescapable suffering, man may find meaning in the suffering when he actualizes his freedom to transcend himself. Then meaningful existence, for Frankl, is purposeful existence derived from an inner spiritual freedom. An individual may utilize his innate freedom to move with purposiveness

⁷Ibid. p. 154.

toward some unifying principle. This unifying principle is whatever external ideal the individual appropriates as worthy of his dedicated attention. Movement toward this ideal gives purposiveness even in the presence of suffering.

For Frankl, creativeness and enjoyment are meaningful, yet his special province is suffering. As an existentialist, Frankl feels that the key to the survival of suffering (the normal lot of man) is to find meaning in the suffering. Each man draws upon his inner spiritual freedom to determine what his attitude will be. Like fate and death, suffering is an ineradicable part of life; life has no completion without it. Yet the acceptance of suffering gives a man the opportunity to add a deeper meaning to his life. Consequently, life never ceases to have meaning. He who sees no sense in life, no aim, no purpose, no point in carrying on, is doomed. When despairing sets in, one needs to stop inquiring about the meaning of life; he needs to consider himself as being questioned by life. The emphasis is shifted from talk to right action and right conduct. Logos, then, equals that meaning which the human is to achieve.

A further contention of Frankl is that there is only one meaning to each situation, and that meaning is not given, but must be detected. Frankl affirms that it is unrealistic to speak of the meaning of human life; one

must speak of the meaning in the concrete situation; for no two situations are repeatable or identical.⁸ That is, in the fleeting passage of time, each moment demands a decision of its own, and this decision is neither transferable from situation to situation nor from person to person. Each man has uniqueness and will find unique meaning. There is no single meaning.

Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.⁹ The meaning of life, then, differs for every man, and for each moment.

Frankl observes that the query concerning the "meaning of life" became a naive query for the suffering prisoners of the Nazi camps, naive because as a philosophical abstraction alone it was totally irrelevant to people engulfed in a life and death struggle. The active creation of something of value gave way to more ultimate considerations of existential decisions concerning life and death, of suffering and dying. As has been said, suffering and dying, privation and death, are included in the meaning of life. Frankl maintains that the hope-

⁸From Frankl's lecture at the School of Theology at Claremont, 11 October 1963, 1:30 p.m.

⁹Frankl, op. cit., p. 122.

lessness of the struggle should not detract from its dignity and its meaning. Man is equipped for the struggle. The will to meaning, as the primary force in man's life, is fact, not faith.¹⁰ Frankl notes that a poll recently conducted in France showed that 89 per cent of the people confessed to a need of "something" which might give purpose to life.¹¹ This something is determined and fulfilled by the individual alone. It constitutes the authentic ideals and values for which one is willing to live and die. Authenticity is stressed, because the values invented by ourselves when taken alone negate the fact that meaning also has an external and demanding character: it pulls man out of himself, perhaps to surrender his self for the sake of another.

Meaning, for Frankl, has both internal and external components. Frankl realizes that until the individual calls upon his inner freedom, he cannot escape the confines of himself; that is, he must first remember the prowess latent within himself, before he can be in a position to "forget" himself. Until he is capable of "forgetting" himself, he cannot experience the meaning which he both seeks and needs. Logotherapy, in assisting the patient to find meaning in his life, assumes a hidden logos

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 154-55.

¹¹Ibid.

(meaning) in every existence. In such a light, meaning seems primarily internal. It plumbs the very depth of the patient's being for what may well serve as a definition of meaning--that for which every being actually longs.

Here the external component enters: the "that" refers to values which lie outside the person, providing a telos toward which he might aim. Such implies the existence of general goals, the ideals and values which a majority of people would hold in common.

Yet there are particular goals which only the individual can fulfill. He cannot be replaced. "Man is a responsible creature and must actualize the potential meaning of his life."¹² The break-down of these particular goals initiates the break-down of meaning, for these particular goals point the way to external and general goals.

As meaning is external to the individual, he must decide for self-transcendence, not self-actualization. The latter is merely the means of realizing the former. True self-actualization points the way to self-transcendence when an individual does a good deed, experiences someone by love, and endures suffering.¹³ True self-actualization is the particular goal which turns one

¹² Ibid., p. 175.

¹³ Ibid., p. 176.

outward to the general goal or service.

Summarily, man cannot survive without meaning, without purposeful orientation to an external value. For Frankl, this orientation is achieved through man's use of his freedom. Man proves to be a human being not in freedom from conditions, but in the stand taken in the midst of these conditions. The failure to exercise the freedom of responsibility subjects man to meaninglessness and death.

Comments on the foregoing are deferred until the evaluation concluding the chapter. It is enough to say here that there is decided agreement with Frankl's main thesis that man cannot live without meaning.

II. HUMANISTIC ATTEMPTS TO SATISFY THE NEED

The atheistic humanist is in agreement with the atheistic nihilist that the universe lacks an objective reference. He is in further agreement with Frankl that some form of reference is required for purposeful orientation and life. Yet he is unwilling to say with the nihilist that because nihilating circumstances are in evidence the individual is defeated. The humanist seeks to become his own reference, and hence to defy a hostile cosmos. Whatever optimism he is able to muster is due to the exercise of his own talents. His view of external circumstances is devoutly pessimistic, and in this comes the anomaly: the humanist is committed to an outlook of

meaninglessness, yet he is equally committed to an attitude of meaning. He is forced to live with the paradox of paradoxes--if there is no meaning, there is meaning.

His only outlet is an "in spite of" resistance to the inevitable suffering and injustice which he senses to be typical of life. Such a defensive attitude inevitably leads him to view himself as the mitigating circumstance in an otherwise open and shut case of meaninglessness. This attitude is observed in the following survey of some of the current literature showing some of the approaches to meaning in spite of objective meaninglessness.

Meaning through acceptance of despair. Albert Camus has captured the despair of meaninglessness in the portrayal of the stranger known throughout as "I."¹⁴ Indifferently propelled along a path of circumstances, the hero moves unfeelingly from the funeral of his mother, to the seduction of his paramour, to the aid of his "friend." His mother dies in a charity institution, and he sheds no false tears for her. His lover proposes marriage and he accepts, readily admitting that he would have accepted had she been another. The hero shuffles from one situation to another, a helpless pawn on the chessboard

¹⁴Albert Camus, The Stranger (New York: Vintage Books, 1958).

of fate. Queried about a new position by his employer, he answers, "One never changes his way of life; one life is as good as another"

Yet his present life moves relentlessly to encounter with the one whom he is to slay. His pal embroils him in a personal vendetta that culminates in his inadvertent slaying of the opponent. Caught up in the meaningless struggle between forces, he battles an elusive cosmos whose nature is imperturbable, vengeful, elusive, consistently malevolent, favoring the bitch-goddess. This is the Arab who seeks vengeance upon Raymond (the friend) for seducing his sister, a prostitute.

At the trial, "I" is confronted with everything except the charge of homicide. His refusal to "play the game" at his mother's funeral is the chief testimony against him. "Do you love your mother?" The lawyer, the magistrate, the judge continually hammer the question. "Then why didn't you weep?" Justice is a mockery. To encounter the cosmos is to lose even in seeming victory. The court hearing is so much a social gathering that the accused feels like "a sort of gatecrasher." He has no say. Even his defense counsel refuses to allow him to plead for himself. He finally becomes a participant in the proceedings after the sentence of death. What then can he say?

In prison he realizes that there is no hope of

escape. All that one may wish is that the executioner's apparatus will function efficiently. The priest is no solace with his vain utterances of some afterlife. "No! No! I refuse to believe it," the priest remonstrates, "I'm sure you've often wished there was an afterlife." Camus concludes his tale by having the prisoner mutter words to the effect: How I am bored by the priest. He does not understand that already I have found my peace. Emptied of hope, I found my freedom; in resignation to despair I found my life. My final hope is for a huge crowd to witness my execution.

In Godot the situation is one of strained and meaningless waiting. In The Stranger it is one of hopeless resignation. Both rankle over the problems of suffering and apparent injustices. The former find meaninglessness in an expectancy void of fulfillment. The latter finds meaning in snuffing out the light of possibility. At least in this manner the light will no longer delude. This is a form of passive rebellion, become active in calling upon the individual's mastery of himself.

Camus maintains that suffering so completely exhausts faith and hope that Christianity's historical promise of the kingdom and then of eternal life have reduced the toiling masses to masses completely without God. Therefore, a stranger love goes out to the fellow sufferer whose cause becomes my cause: I rebel, therefore we exist.

And we are alone.¹⁵ Rebellion is opposed to nihilism on the question perplexing the twentieth century--"How to live without grace and without justice?" Nihilism sees human nature as a historical force pummelled into meaninglessness.¹⁶ For Camus, the essential question is, "Can one live and stand one's ground in a state of rebellion?" Nietzsche altered the question to, "Can one live in believing in nothing?" His answer is affirmative. Rebellion for him begins by saying, "God is dead." Hence, nihilism, in the universe of total negation and despair, must look to the future as "the only transcendental value for men without God."¹⁷

Rebellion answers that "the future is the only kind of property that the masters willingly concede to the slaves."¹⁸ The slave, knowing only misery in the present life, finds consolation in the assurance that the future belongs to him. The metaphysical rebel knows that to triumph over nihilism is to be willing to die for that which one negates. Such action results in a value made immortal by the rebel, for real rebellion is a

¹⁵Albert Camus, The Rebel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 303.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 194.

creator of values.

The romantic rebel takes his place alongside the metaphysical rebel in the long history of rebellion. In tracing this history, Camus notes that Sade's idea of God launched the great offensive against a hostile heaven. Sade conceived of God as a criminal divinity who cruelly oppresses mankind. Even Christ witnessed to the effects of this cruelty. Why, then, should man be different? The romantic rebel, the dandy, becomes so disenchanted with his nostalgia for the unrealizable good, that he considers himself forced into a position of evil. He breaks clean from God, hallows the fleeting moment, and takes his own destiny in hand. He finds reality only in the impressions others have of him. This mirror existence plunges him into a make believe world in the hope of achieving true meaning or reality. In postulating "evil as the answer to evil," the romantic rebel reveals his ambition: to talk to God as one equal to another.

In such a conversation, the topic would inevitably be the conditions of suffering and death. Ivan Karamazov, chafing over the suffering of little children, rejects suffering as the way of truth, rejects truth as unacceptable when obtained in this fashion, and hence, rejects eternity--pleased to place himself among the damned. If there is no immortality, there is no virtue; if there is no virtue, there is no law. "Everything is

permitted" (Nihilism).¹⁹ Following a similar line, the line which so closely skirts nihilism, the metaphysical rebellionist, assured of condemnation and without hope of immortality, has decided to murder God: "even if you do exist, you do not deserve to exist; therefore, you do not exist."²⁰

Death is a staunch foe. The rebel avows that he asks not for life, but for reasons for living; yet he affirms that death deprives life of meaning. To fight against death means that life has meaning. The struggle has led Breton (surrealism) to proclaim, "We shall have the hereafter in our lifetime."²¹ Such further reveals the rebel's dreary view of the human condition and its Creator. He refuses to hallow suffering, as does Berdyaev. He considers death an enemy not overcome by the love of God. In the face of man's solitude and the lack of morality, he seeks to build his own competing creation upon his own beliefs. Hegel demonstrates a higher instance of the struggle between man in chains and the cruel God of Abraham: the Christian slave, agonizing under a guilty conscience and wishing to deny everything oppressing him, takes refuge in the world beyond and binds himself to a

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

²¹ Ibid., p. 101.

new master in God; otherwise, Hegel identifies the supreme master with absolute death.

Camus clings to meaning through rebellion against an unjust order, but appropriates only the best of the romantic and the metaphysical rebel. The rebel, clinging to his motto, "I rebel, therefore we exist," and the "We are alone" of metaphysical rebellion, achieves ends not by killing and dying to produce the new being; but by living and letting live in order "to create what we are."

The rebel demands unity--identity of man with man, aspiring for common destiny, seeking dignity. Lacking this unity, rebellion formulates a substitute universe (reality). It both transcends and supports history, with its injustice, instability of time, and death. Its goal is upholding the nature of man and the beauty of the world in the face of the ugliness of suffering engendered by injustice. Thus, it knows what is good, and is often forced to do evil to accomplish it. Yet being incapable of justifying evil, the rebel is content to destroy himself for having participated in it.

The rebel cannot reach beyond, for he can master in himself everything that should be mastered. When he accomplishes this, then he has meaning in his life. The external grace provided by God is no longer real to him. As his grace is from within himself and of himself, he knows that the clasped hand in the darkness is his only

salvation. This is a love bred of the need for survival, a pitiful reflection of the despair engendered by suffering.

Vahanian is apparently correct: for Nietzsche the death of God gave the impression of deliverance; for Camus it gives the impression of only one remaining philosophical problem, suicide. Yet even before man commits suicide, he would have to deny it has any meaning; but in its contemplation, one may find some affirmation of life.²²

Walker Percy agrees that man derives satisfaction in life only through flaunting his courage in the face of the evil caused by death. "In this world goodness is destined to defeat,"²³ but one justifies his existence only in knowing the sweet victory of defeat. The victory is in going down fighting. The struggle is against the evil in existence. The evil in question goes under many labels: boredom, the commonplace, conformity, group pressure, custom, tradition, everydayness, etc. One seems to be caught on a carousel whose prescribed circuit bodes novelty only in the challenging dare to leap off. The faces that swim into consciousness are death masks. Everyone is dead. Identities are lost behind these sunken eyes; present only is the blank catatonic stare of the victim suffering from

²²Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God (New York: George Braziller, 1961), p. 132.

²³Walker Percy, The Moviegoer (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1960), p. 53.

extreme shock, the shock of learning that it costs to stand apart. The only faces which have individuality are the faces of the haters. The lovers are all wrapped in gray flanneled winding sheets, waiting for the trumpet call of "How's your steak?" or "He's a communist sympathizer," or "What are you taking to the potluck tonight?" Existence shock.

Binx Bolling in "The Moviegoer" seeks escape from the carousel. He seeks it through the artful dodge of making money, of making movie dates, and of making girls. Each represents a flight: of money, into the world of adventure; of movies, into the world of fantasy; of girls, into the world of passion. Each represents a god, a god which does not satisfy.

The author, Walker Percy, asks, "What does satisfy?" This is the chase which takes one into the unreal world of cinemaland. If it is not to be found in existence, then perhaps it is to be found in a description of existence. This description is better penned by Alfred Hitchcock than by Matthew or Mark. It is better enacted by Rory Clahoun than by Jesus Christ. Even "satisfaction" is a nonentity. All that we can hope for is the sensation of being able to say No to suicide. Satisfaction is a thing of degree. The cult of mediocrity has pledged itself to the lowest degree of attainment. It has decided that martini dialogue and sheepfold membership are the stuff that constitute bliss.

Those of the upper strata have set for themselves a maximum goal: they have decided that theirs is a dying heritage, but one to be preserved until the last ounce of blueblood has been replaced by booster shots. Their train of thought runs through the tunnel of their upturned noses.

In between, on the misty flats, the heroic may find an unbleached meaning in life by embracing one who despairs. Despair is another degree of satisfaction--the nth degree. It seeks a God with a firm hand. Anyone willing to be God has at his disposal a ready-made disciple. The love which goes out to a despairing human is the only type of love remaining to a lost generation. Man is dead. Therefore, God is dead. Coward take my coward hand, while we explore the awesome wonders of Sheol.

So the tale unfolds in the search for meaning through despair.

Meaning through intellect to creativeness. "Shall our God exist and be evil or shall he be recognized as the creation of our own conscience?"²⁴ This question by Bertrand Russell sets the stage for his affirmation that the free man will choose the latter option, and will draw upon his creative powers to produce his own values. Russell is intensely concerned with good and evil, and has

²⁴Bertrand Russell, Selected Papers (New York: Random House, n.d.), "A Free Man's Worship."

eliminated any requirement for deity by simply linking any conception of deity with the prevalence of evil. He makes evil synonymous with Death, Pain, and Despair, the "common doom" of man, caught as an innocent in the reckless power surge of blind forces. Here again is the familiar refrain common to both the nihilist and the humanist. As death, pain, and despair are sensed as predominantly negative, a God who could visit such negativity upon His children does not really exist. Therefore, Russell would have the free man unite with others in a creativity which makes meaningful the brief years spent on earth. As life beyond the grave is an illusion, free man must create values which are unaffected by death and change.

Now is the time for the creation of such values, Russell contends, for technology has provided sufficient security and leisure. Russell feels that our hopes for mankind must all be within the framework of science and industrialism, that nothing opposed to science can hope for lasting success. Yet science is only the means to an end. The end is the "aristocratic virtues"--fearlessness, independence of judgment, emancipation from the herd, a leisurely culture.²⁵

This is the vision. The author proceeds to the malady: ninety-nine per cent of the world's population are

²⁵ Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

sacrificed for the happiness of a privileged one per cent. This condition exists because of inertia, and because the masses are indoctrinated to feel that full competition is better than full cooperation. Therefore, it is first necessary to educate people so they will understand that there is enough happiness to go around. Creative participation in the aristocratic virtues constitutes happiness. Russell disdains those who participate in the "morality of suicide"--those trained to kill, to value power over richness of life. Power, he feels, is surely not happiness nor the way to meaningful existence.

Russell is certain that the approach to meaningful existence might well be grounded on a rational approach; yet he acknowledges the inability of such a motive to "prove sufficiently powerful." He concludes that the prior step is to stabilize and include the life and science of every nation of the world.²⁶

Science provides the time in which men might think. Russell states that a lack of time and a prevalence of fear are the main hindrances to creative thinking. Men fear to think because certain cherished beliefs may be set aside. Yet life is never furthered in the presence of fear. "Hope, not fear, is the creative principle in human affairs."²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., pp. xvi-xviii.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

The hope of the world is a hope centered in men who wish to create a world in which the creative spirit is alive, where life is lived as an adventure full of joy and hope. The hope is based on an urge to create, rather than the yearning to possess. (This latter breeds fear.) Russell is certainly allied with Joseph Sittler who describes as "the tyranny of boundlessness" the erroneous manifestation of hope through the technical advances of man.²⁸ But the relation breaks down when Russell affirms that creation is not subject to outside powers, but draws solely upon the talents of men. Sittler would argue that love has its inception in God's grace. He would not expect cruelty, envy, and domination to fade before a love conceived in man. Yet Russell is convinced that the "physical evils"--death, pain, hunger--"evils of character"--and "evils of power"--may be set aside through a reverence for science and art, human relations, and joy of life. He feels that such virtues are best safeguarded by communal ownership of land and capital. Hence, socialism becomes the necessary step for removing the evils of the world.²⁹

By way of comparison in the midst of nihilating circumstances, where Camus would say rebel, Russell would

²⁸ Joseph Sittler, The Ecology of Faith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961).

²⁹ Russell, op. cit., pp. 134, 157.

say excel. Where Camus would say accept conditions but keep your defiance alive, Russell would say alter conditions by keeping your creativeness alive. Where Camus would find brotherhood necessarily limited to the select few who have the courage to rebel, Russell would find the possibility of brotherhood open to all humanity. Where Camus would assert the necessity of isolation ("we are alone"), Russell would extol the virtue of the social contract (socialism). Camus would accept the evils of the world; Russell would seek to eliminate them.

Both are agreed that existence has no objective meaning, and that man must find his own meaning in spite of this adverse condition.

Meaning through sex. D. H. Lawrence struggles continually with the female principle and its oppressive perversion of the male. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., whose Rehearsals of Discomposure³⁰ presents an excellent analysis of Lawrence, has aided greatly in bringing order out of the chaos which is so often attributed to Lawrence. Lawrence's numerous books include Sons and Lovers, The White Peacock, Lady Chatterly, The Living Death, The Rainbow, and Women in Love. Scott has shown that the constant refrain in these is a form of "mysticism" which

³⁰ Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Rehearsals of Discomposure (New York: King's Crown Press, 1952).

seeks the transmission of the individuality implied in separation into absorption into some universal life-force. Such brings salvation from the ultimate loneliness of the individual human spirit.

In analyzing the human situation, Lawrence is driven to despair through anguish over man's ontological solitude. Lawrence could never say, "We are alone," as does Camus. This affirmation of plurality would imply at least a twosomeness as a minimum possibility in man's struggle against the universe. Lawrence feels that man's utter failing is an inherent oneness which stubbornly refuses to allow him to unite with another. The ontological tragedy is the gulf separating finite man from other finite men. As long as man says "I," he cannot say "we."

While some men rejoice over the particularity of individuality, Lawrence finds it a decided curse. That is, the assertion of one's natural being places unnatural barriers in the way of true relationships. Tragedy, then, is implied in selfhood. One does not have to ponder the far reaches of the universe to find there confirmation of meaninglessness; he may simply note the emptiness within himself, the emptiness occasioned by his frustrated yearning for love.

Yet people cannot love properly, because they do not know how to love. They do not know how to humble their

egos. The ego continually forces the individual to stand apart. That individuals are opposites is the factor which robs life of meaning. Lawrence best indicates this polar relationship through the medium of sex. The sexual motif is prominent in Lawrence's novels, but serves merely as a tool to show the darkness separating individuals, opposites. Sex indicates that individuals are opposed, not complementary.

The natural inference is that improved sexual habits and techniques would narrow the gulf separating human beings. This, of course, is not the message of Lawrence. On the contrary, sex alone only aggravates and broadens the gulf, regardless of the attention one pays to the details of perfection.³¹ What is required is a higher dimension to give worth to the dimension of sex.

This higher dimension is the transcendental spiritual world. This world so closely skirts the oriental absorption into an All, that Scott labels it the via mystica of Lawrence.³² Here there are no others, no God--only aloneness. Of course, a painful aloneness is present in human affairs, and one asks why Lawrence would seek escape from it in further aloneness. Does Lawrence speak of an aloneness which is painless? Yes. Lawrence gives

³¹Ibid., p. 134.

³²Ibid., p. 112ff.

his sexual motif an almost religious overtone.

He feels that absorption into the Infinite eliminates the ego, and thus eliminates the hurt of having to stand apart while yearning to come together. Or, individuality is transcended, and one no longer feels the inner tension of desiring another while at the same time rebuffing the person desired. In the transcendent realm, one neither desires nor rebuffs. Lacking identity, he is a part of the whole. Being a part of the whole, of a unit, he is one. He is alone.

Incidentally, in his desire to escape from the world, Lawrence reveals his non-Christian standing. Lawrence believes that the relations between two opposites (male and female) can never be one of love. Hence, the world is evil in the absence of love, and one must escape to find love. The Christian knows that love is possible, because the sacramental quality given existence in the Word becoming flesh makes of the world a good world: the agape of God allows a relationship with Him which extends also to men.

So the sexual motif is first of all illustrative of the vast differences separating persons. Strangely enough, while Lawrence uses sex to indicate the gulf, he also uses sex to heal the breach. The same condition which indicates meaninglessness also indicates the possibility of meaning. Sex is an evil only when taken without the required concentration of spirituality. Again, Lawrence is

advocating nothing as simple as the marital vow of love which legalizes the union and safeguards the conscience against inhibiting tendencies. Spirituality refers to the sound, mystic, spiritual marriage which merges the hitherto separated egos. At this point, Lawrence makes crystal clear the fact that he regards sex as being essentially good when purified through a supernatural transformation.

The "mystic marriage" connotes a spiritual and mental intimacy which precedes a physical intimacy. It is the prior step of the true marriage, which alone can merge the separate egos. Fantasia sets forth this thrust. The mystical marriage implies a "being in love with love," rather than a being in love with the other; it is a love of the Tristan-Isolde type--idealistic and reaching its greatest heights during those times of least physical intimacy. The lovers are doomed to find their greatest bliss only in parting, for togetherness brings only abject disappointment when the forces of separation have not been overcome. Loving each other without adequate groundwork can lead only to disaster. This is the failing of sex without mystical knowledge and mystical participation. Hence, the statement: for sound marriages, the prior step is being in love with love, rather than being in love with each other. Lawrence's sex mystery represents a further extension of the Tristan myth.

To be more specific, Lawrence feels that the key to wholesome and meaningful relations is the soundness of relations between marital partners. Such marriages bring completion not only for the marital partners, but allow offspring to grow up under the influence of true love. Yet sound marriages are impossible without a proper approach to sex. When merely the expression of a temporary passion, or of an egoistic desire to possess, or of either partner's wish to make the other person an extension of his ego, sex is nihilating in its consequences.

Lawrence arrived at the above conclusion after considerable worry over his own childhood frustrations and their later distortions of his marital felicity. Born in 1885 near Nottingham, England, Lawrence presented in his youth the classical instance of the oedipal complex. So thoroughgoing was his premature thrust into the male role by his mother that he posed the following method of healing the breach between man and man: new society can only be built upon sound marriage, where mothers find fulfillment in their husbands, and not in an "insatiable devouring" of the sons. This turning to the son in frustration only renders him incapable of ideal love for his wife at the later stage of marriage. His sexual awareness has been too soon awakened by his mother (whom the wife can never replace).³³

³³Scott, op. cit., p. 138.

This dilemma appears in Sons and Lovers. Because every woman was but an extension of his mother's remembered presence, Lawrence never felt complete in the presence of the opposite sex. Women sensed this incompleteness and hence loved him essentially out of pity and compassion. His reaction was to hate the woman who had dwarfed his masculinity. This theme is evident in the story of Mellors and Bertha Coutts in Lady Chatterly.

The mystic marriage points the way out of this dilemma. The process would be accomplished first through a "blood-relationship" between men, a sort of homosexual union that would culminate in the ideal heterosexual union. Aaron's Rod carries this theme. Supposedly, the homosexual union would expose a man to the delights of domesticity which no woman can adequately provide. Not being a man, she would not understand that which a man craves. Yet she would benefit from the training course in which he participates with his own sex by having the blood-companion smooth the way for her. The mystic marriage is a relationship of trust and love. Trust and love are values which know no sex. These values are so important that refusal to experience them through the proposed method means destruction. Here we have what Scott calls an "essentially private religion."

Three inferences may be drawn from the proposal of Lawrence: we do not know how to love; acquiring the skill

is not a matter to be left to chance, but to design; and individuals must first be reconciled to themselves before they can be reconciled to others. This last implies that the near homosexual union allows an individual to use that which is nearest to him (his own sex) as a mirror of himself; then when he is at peace with his own image, he is able to progress to the next stage of making peace with that which is different.

This seems to be the meaning of Lawrence's spirit world. Certainly others have drawn diverging inferences from his mystical proposal; yet if Lawrence is addressing himself to the problems of the human limitations implied in selfhood, he must be pointing to redemption on the earthly plane where humanity, selfhood, and sex take place. Thus, the above inferences have meaning for temporal existence primarily because they are presented in a demythologized form.

Sex can be meaningful. No, it must be meaningful, as it is so integral to life. Lawrence has taken a universal trait of man, has lifted it to a metaphysical plane, has revealed it there in its symbolic and spiritual essence, and has returned it in its purified state to the temporal plane of existence. He feels that as sex, when poorly understood, can reduce all of life to meaninglessness in its far reaching consequences, so can sex, when rightly understood, exalt all of life to the fullness of

meaning.

III. CRITICISM OF THE HUMANISTIC APPROACHES

To speak of the fullness of meaning as a possible derivative from a situation of avowed meaninglessness is an inconsistency which reason cannot support. Either there is meaning to begin with, or the picture of objective meaninglessness must be accepted as the final condition. If the humanist is able to see hope subsequent to his analysis of a situation of hopelessness, then his view of objective meaninglessness is not the true picture of the situation. His very argument for meaning betrays the inadequacy of his view that there is no meaning. The creation of something out of nothing (creatio ex nihilo) has historically been the special province of the creator God, Jehovah. That the humanist should abrogate to himself such a divine function is obviously his intent. Yet he reveals his inability to do so by taking raw materials already in existence. He seizes a universe which he did not create and attempts to govern it more to his liking. He takes eternal values like justice and love and refashions them to fit his finite frame of reference. He feels that he stands in isolation because some arresting force refuses to allow him opportunity for fellowship. It is more likely that he seeks fellowship on the wrong basis.

His first error is in his misinterpretation of justice. He is the accused standing before the Court of our God; he has committed the crime, but he wants to dictate the terms of his sentence. The sentence is implied in the crime. Self-love breeds self-destruction. Pride breeds the fall. Man is willing to enter into fellowship with God, if God is willing to suspend the law of cause and effect. If God is willing to intervene constantly to save man from the results of his own evil acts, then man is willing to enter into fellowship. That such sustained divine intervention destroys man's freedom is apparent to man; but such is the dilemma into which he casts God. If God "fails" to extricate Himself, then man takes his revenge by murdering God. Then man is alone.

The second error in man's quest for fellowship is in the priority which he attaches to his relationships. The love of God and the love of fellow men are not the same thing. The love of God is primary and necessary to the love of our fellows. The most idyllic relationship between David and Jonathan cannot masquerade as the love of God. David loves Jonathan and Jonathan loves David; but what does this say about God? Nothing--unless David first loves God; unless Jonathan first loves God. There are two reasons for this: we do not know love unless we first love God; we cannot sustain love unless we draw upon the love

of God. Love is an act of the will. Until we will the good for God, we cannot will the good for man. We but commit idolatry when we say that we love man, but hate God. There is no true meaning in idolatry. There is only the false fellowship of the finite.

Of course, some amount of charity is in order. The atheistic humanist cannot embrace God. Yet he is driven to find reasonable replacement, because he cannot live without purposeful orientation. Frankl's demonstration of man's need for meaningful existence is obviously inclusive of all men, regardless of their personal views concerning the existence of a God. However, in illustrating the need for meaning, Frankl does not satisfactorily say how it is met. For instance, one may take Frankl's views on the universality and inevitability of suffering and the method of coping with it. In essence, he says, that which is present is necessary; that which is necessary has meaning; the meaning which it has is dependent upon the attitude adopted by the individual.

But what determines the individual's attitude? What causes him to muster the forces which lead him to actualize his potential? Is it his courage? What is the source of this courage? Frankl is right, of course: each person determines what his attitude toward suffering and death will be. Each man may exercise his inner freedom to react positively toward the adversities of life. But what

is the source of this inner spiritual freedom? Finite man? Frankl would say No, for he continually points the patient toward a purposeful goal. Now what goal can give a man fulfillment in the face of persistent suffering? The goal which is present when the suffering has finally ceased. If the suffering should ease this side of the grave, then the sufferer is strengthened until that eventful time. If it should cease only in death, then the sufferer is strengthened in the knowledge that God is aware and will give the resurrection of meaning. What, beside God, can give a man purposiveness in the face of suffering that leads to death? Surely not the fact that his past sufferings have inherent meaning, apart from suffering for God's kingdom. Besides, a goal connotes a future aspiration, and what is behind one hardly qualifies for the future dimension of time. No, death is the final test of any goal which seeks to instill meaning into a hopeless situation. Death for the man who experiences his life as unfulfilled, for the man who has given himself in dedication to God, for the believer who has experienced the deprivations of intense suffering--death casts all into meaninglessness, unless it is vindicated by more life. This is the goal toward which Frankl can legitimately point the faithful.

Frankl is right: meaningful existence is purposeful existence, purposeful orientation to external values. But

what external value is worthy, if not God? What external goal is fulfilling, if not God? Self transcendence through self-actualization is indeed the pressing requirement, but self-transcendence requires a pattern. This was the pattern presented by Christ, the Logos of God.

Frankl's interpretation of the Logos as the meaning which is external is not enough, not when he reinterprets Logos to mean that for which every person yearns. This thinking makes the Logos too subjective a reference, too fluctuating a goal. The Logos of John's Prologue is an objective ideal that every man is free to accept or reject. This Logos is the way for all men, not a way for any man to select from a random collection.

Frankl is correct in finding meaning in purposeful living; but one living within the circle of faith will know that a man's whole purpose is to glorify God and to serve Him forever. The "forever," for a God of the living, extends also beyond the grave.

Camus sees neither evidence of nor necessity for patterns of intelligence at work in the universe. Through the acceptance of this condition, he calls forth a resistance to any system which presents itself as intelligible. This clears the ground for man's use of his own resources of intelligence. Why should man seek his meaning in God? In the circumstances imposed by an evil cosmos? Is Camus denying the existence of God on the one hand, and

then rebelling against Him on the other? Either there exist patterns of meaning against which one rebels, or there exist no patterns of meaning, in which case one has nothing to rebel against. If there are no patterns of meaning, if one consequently takes to himself his own meaning, if one insists on a doctrine of rebellion, then he is in the embarrassing position of rebelling against himself.

Camus would snuff out the light of possibility so that there would be no opportunity for disappointment. And he calls this rebellion? Rebellion is reaction against an established order. Reaction, then, is reverse or return action. It is not pure defensiveness. It is counter-offensiveness. Defensive living wears a scowl. The counter-offensive wears determination and hope. It is a poor soldier who mistakes his friend for his enemy. Man, not God, is man's worst enemy. That against which he should rebel is the demonic within himself. For this he is equipped; but all heaven and earth cannot equip him to do battle with God.

Rebellion against the enemy within is not self-mastery which implies a grace from within oneself. Grace equals free gift. Gift implies an external source of giving for its truest worth. Grace, then, is inherently external. If man is to master himself, he must call on the external grace of God.

Walker Percy, by seeking meaning in the acceptance of

despair, only compounds the despair by fleeing from reality. For instance, he accepts that boring chatter is a part of life, but to escape it, he creates a make believe world. He fails to see that the darkness of the movie house makes of the dreamer only a helpless observer. The light is cast on the players, those who accept their functions as participants and play out their parts. Courage is required to stand before the footlights. Courage has its grounding only in God, for the fearless man has not yet been created. If indeed all the world's a stage, then we must seriously ponder whether any production can proceed without the recognition of the central director.

Both Camus and Percy progress from an unyielding despair to love. If only they spoke of a despair which represents for man the realization that he is a dependent creature! If only they spoke of a love which in the despair of dependence turned to God! If they spoke in these terms, then would their writings take on true hope. There is always hope, for man cannot live without it. There is always the possibility of despair, but man cannot live with it. There is always love, because man cannot reach beyond it. If he could, he would. He would by-pass it for whatever treasure lay beyond. A part of man will always stretch itself to the maximum limit of attainment. This is man's salvation. When he reaches either the darkest limits of despair, or when he contemplates the

highest reaches of joy, there he will encounter love. Love is God. God is love. In the pity of our despair, He is there. In the bliss of our happiness, He is there. And He is there eternally.

Bertrand Russell has also failed in his attempt to give to his own life a meaning which it has not. For all of his denial of the basic tenets of the evolutionistic notion of progress, Russell has not improved on the failures of the same. His rational approach to meaning closely parallels the rationalistic faith in progress of the liberal bourgeois enlightenment.³⁴ This emphasized meaning for humanity as a whole: each generation would build successively upon the foundations of the preceding one, until the last ultimately reached the top. Yet such thinking said little to the individual proletarian, for it put meaning too far into an indefinitely distant future.

Russell would use the leisure created by science to formulate a new era of meaningful values. His tool would be the socialist state, with an upward movement toward the ideal of love. His approach, too, places meaning too far into the future, for merely educating the world that "there is enough happiness to go around" is a herculean task in itself. Spreading the benefits of an advanced technology

³⁴ See Emil Brunner, Eternal Hope (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 83-84.

to the far reaches of the world is another time-consuming and monumental task. For the soul which is sick with suffering and sorrow, the postponement of meaning is unbearable. It is meaningless to say to one who seeks meaning: work that your descendants may enjoy the fullness of meaning; that you sacrifice yourself for the attainment of a goal which the world has never experienced is no cause for dismay; your meaning lies in the sacrificing of yourself for generations yet unborn.

The hope for the afterlife is not a hope based upon the creativeness of man. It is based upon the grace of God. Therefore, it is not a hope based upon an indefinitely distant future, for the grace of God is an ever present reality. It sustains during moments of agony; it fulfills through the knowledge that one is able to share eventually in the fruits of his labor in God's vineyard.

In addition to Russell's failure to avoid the shortcomings of the rationalistic faith in progress, he has failed to surmount the inadequacies of the Marxist classless society. If God is an illusion, then man owes his existence to himself. Of course, the eye of faith perceives that the denial of God is a poor foundation upon which to build; the materialistic conception of man so dehumanizes man that it denies his freedom. The denial of God and the denial of freedom are simply too high a price to pay for a doubtful earthly paradise.

The Marxist revolution was predicated upon the cessation of other-worldly gospels. Puritanism and Quietism had too greatly deemphasized the glories of earth and the possibility of progress hereon. The Marxist classless society sought to prove that the here-and-now could produce a "heaven on earth." John Baillie³⁵ has pointed out the justification of the revolt; however, he has also shown that many of the charges leveled against Christianity's future orientation were unjustified. For instance, Christianity, even when looking toward the consummation, sought to improve the inner man, in the expectation that outer growth would automatically accrue. The rebels, on the other hand, sought to improve conditions directly through outer law. Strangely enough, the Christian conception of the time process has led indirectly to the very hope of earthly progress which now renounces Christianity. The gospel of progress grew out of the gospel of hope for eternal life.³⁶

The larger question is, Can this world be completely meaningful through the realization that one has given his life to make future conditions better? No, not completely. It may appear so to a type of intellectual reason, but it is futile to seek the fullness of meaning

³⁵ John Baillie, And the Life Everlasting (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 37, 45.

³⁶ Ibid.

in history, as is done by Hegel; for the negative in history is the real which no amount of idealism can abolish. There is a certain element of meaning, but it is not the fullness of meaning. Hegel's outreach for fulfillment through reason falsely assumes that man's essence is reason.³⁷ This is the same error made by Russell. The essential being of man is love. As this love is not fulfilled in history, the fullness of love and meaning must be beyond history.

Lawrence speaks of the ontological gulf separating man from man. He is correct. It exists. But he is wrong on two counts: the gulf is not necessarily a portion of selfhood; and, secondly, it is only the symptom of a deeper malady--the gulf separating man from God. Narrowing the gulf, allowing God to reconcile man to Himself, is the first step in man being reconciled to man. True selfhood is present only in being which turns to God. Turning to God assures that one shares in a love which allows him to turn to men. Thus, to say that the true self inherently stands apart is to mistake the inauthentic self for the authentic self moored in God. The individual who is incapable of drawing close to his brother has failed to show his true humanity. God would not have us stand apart.

Lawrence is correct in attributing much of man's

³⁷ Emil Brunner, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

alienation to man's ego. However, his proposed spiritualizing of sex is only one facet of the larger solution to the problem. He would seek to rebuild the ego; Christianity seeks to reorient it. The ego (the "I") is demonic only when it turns inward to self-isolation. As Buber has shown, it is productive when it turns outward to a "Thou." Turning the ego outward is an act of the will, not of sex. As the will is Biblically the center of man, the heart, the will moves man to turn outward to the stranger and the neighbor.

Because man perpetually fails to do the good he wills, he utilizes his will primarily to yield his whole being to the will of God. The resulting harmonious relationship allows God to perform the good deeds of His will through the will of the man. As the will of God is for relations of love, both within and without the ties of marriage, man may know the joys of wholesome I-Thou fellowship continually. Relations of sex are included also, for sex is only alienating when reduced to an I-It basis.

Alliance with the will of God, then, is the transcendental realm for Lawrence's transcendental ego, not a mystic absorption into Infinity. Regarding the latter, how can I know that I have found meaning if I am not aware of "I"? No, eliminating the ego is not the answer. The answer lies in placing the ego in proper perspective in relation to God. This action will humble the ego through

the realization that the grace of God is that which gives the individual his being and his meaning. No cause for self-exaltation exists. Further, the ego takes on a friendlier outlook toward others, through the confidence of knowing that it is secure in God's grace both now and forevermore.

* * *

The atheistic humanist cannot fulfill the requirement for meaningful existence within himself and without God. When he attempts to do so, he is forced from one position to another. To begin with, if he accepts the nihilist's view of meaninglessness, he is logically forced to accept nihilistic despair. As he cannot live continually in despair, he is forced to become his own source of meaning. As his attempts to give meaning to himself persistently fail, he is forced either to regress to despair, or to concede that life does have meaning. His spirit will not allow him to embrace the former; his will does not allow him to embrace the latter: he knows that if life has meaning, then God is the external source of this meaning. Yet he stubbornly refuses to accept the existence of God and a hope anchored in Him. This is his utter failing.

CHAPTER IV

MEANING IN GOD WITHOUT A FUTURE HOPE

We have viewed the stand of the nihilistic atheist, who finds only meaninglessness in a world of total negation. We have surveyed the position of the humanistic atheist, who also denies the existence of the Christian God, but who seeks meaningful existence none the less. Now we examine two positions of the Christian existentialists, who stand within the Christian tradition, but without the hope for an afterlife.

First we explore Rudolf Bultmann's approach to meaning through faith. By reception of the central affirmation that God has acted for man in Jesus Christ, the believer receives an openness for the future that conditions his existence in the present. Each moment of existence gives new opportunity to decide for authentic existence. And man must decide.

Then we present Paul Tillich's approach to meaning through the New Being brought by the Christ. The old eon has passed away in the new existence heralded by one who appearing under the conditions of existence overcame them. This was possible because of a total transparency to the ground of being, the ground of meaning. Man may decide in each moment of existence to make himself open to the new

existence by simply accepting that he is accepted.

Finally, we attempt an evaluation of the above to determine whether these approaches fulfill the requirements for meaningful existence. The central criticism concerns the deemphasis of the future component of God's time.

I. BULTMANN: MEANING THROUGH FAITH

Ultimate reality as the criterion for human values.

Bultmann traces the Christian understanding of meaningful existence to its Hebraic inception in obedience to the reality that is the will of God.¹ Historically, the Ionian philosophers first raised the problem of ultimate reality--the criteria for human values and actions, the foundation from which all phenomena derive their existence in a state of becoming and decaying. The historical development of Greek thought had its completion in the attestation of meaning as man's efforts to realize in himself the universal and eternal. Man is therefore a microcosmos of the macrocosmos, a reflection of the archetypal pattern in the divine mind.

Primitive Judaism was never inclined to this conception of man. Man is the product of the transcendent Creator. As such, he owes eternal obedience to the will of

¹Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956), p. 121.

the Creator, God. God is primary Will, uncaused Will, which need not justify creative willing to the reason of the created.² Without obedience to God, there is no meaning to existence. The will of God is to be found in the formal authority of Scripture.

In the Old Testament, then, faith grasps the reality that is God. Faith starts with the primitive Hebrew conception of God as the Creator who justifiably demands obedience and dependence, and who bestows dignity and long life. To say that a man is righteous, that he enjoys long life, is to say that his life has meaning. The sinner who defies the will of God is punished with premature death.

What the Greek apprehended by reason, the Hebrew apprehended by faith. His response was not one of rational understanding, but of awe. This God who created the nation and the world by mere fiat was moving it toward a divinely appointed goal. The meaning of existence, then, becomes the purpose of God and His moral demands.³ To know God's will is to acknowledge Him, to submit to His unfathomable purpose, to wait with patience upon Him.

Suffering presented no great problem. The Hebrew merely looked to the future to find God when God seemed

² Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 70, 135.

³ Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

absent in the present. As man is nothing in the sight of God, he can make no demands upon God. Even the suffering of the righteous is included in God's will. Rebellion against God's will, or any disobedience to a lawfully constituted authority, constitutes sin. Sin is also the doubting of God's sovereignty. As such it is guilt in the sight of human society and in the sight of God. As guilt it requires atonement.⁴

Atonement gives the hope of forgiveness and grace. Yet experience showed that sin and ill-fortune remained after repentance; further, loyalty to the covenant seemed perpetually in doubt; hence, hope of forgiveness and grace are transferred to an eschatological future.

This is the background against which Jesus must be seen. The message of Jesus was a radical demand for obedience. The concepts of God as Father, of love of neighbor, were prevalent as early as the prophets. (The command to love is subsumed under the will of God.) Jesus, a rabbi, was undoubtedly familiar with these concepts; His primary contribution was the return to the nearness of God, the radicality of God's demand in the now.

It is against the background of Jesus' radical demand that Bultmann derives his meaningful existence through faith. It has been seen that at the time of Jesus,

⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

obedience and hope defined meaning for the life of the people: obedience in the law, hope in the promise of the end of earthly things and the glorification of God and His people. Jesus preached a message of repentance in preparation for the Kingdom of God. The "Kingdom of God" as preached by Jesus means deliverance, that eschatological deliverance ending everything earthly. Man has an Either-Or decision to make: the will of God or his own interests, obedience or disobedience.⁵

Jesus went a step further, however. His radical demand called for obedience not to a formal authority, (for there is often conflict in Scripture); but to the decision-making powers of the individual in seeing what God commands. There is risk implied in this freedom, but one has adequate guidelines. God's commands are intelligible, and one enters in more completely when he consents to them with his whole being, rather than externally and blindly subjecting himself to an authority he does not understand. One cannot escape the requirement to discover for himself what is required of him and to do it.⁶

For Jesus, faith is possible only if one is obedient to the demand which he discerns that God has placed upon him. "Thy Kingdom come" is the prayer that God's name be

⁵Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., pp. 35-36.

⁶Ibid., p. 77.

made holy, and His will be fulfilled on earth.

Negatively, Jesus would have men renounce the world and be ready for God's reign. Positively, He preached love. Following His crucifixion, the church gave His preaching a new form when it linked Him with the "Man"⁷ to whom He was pointing. It is from this new form that we must disentangle the meaning of the proclamation for our time. Jesus proclaimed the message. The church proclaimed Him.

Meaning through faith. Bultmann initiates Christianity with the disciples and the Easter faith, for herein lies the all-important proclamation. Faith is the believing in the kerygma, the proclamation of God's act in Jesus Christ. To believe in the preaching means that simultaneously God acts within the believer: the old self dies on the cross and the new self is resurrected to the new life of love. The believer accepts this act as a once-for-all-act.⁸

In the system of Bultmann, the complete reception of the proclamation (faith) follows a sequence progressing

⁷Bultmann interprets the Aramaic son of man as not a messianic title at all, but as "man" or "I." See Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 30.

⁸John B. Cobb, Jr., Living Options in Protestant Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 229.

from proclamation to restoration:

1. Proclamation. The word of preaching, in the sense of Paul and John, leads one to understand Christ's appearance as the eschatological event (see below) which terminates the worldliness of man.⁹ As a believer, man steps over from death into life. Both Paul and John are aware of natural death as a concern of man; but death also takes the form of spiritual non-existence. Hence, to speak of life means the quality of existence, in God. The primitive Hebrew was never committed to accept death as the natural state of man; it resulted because of sin (rebellion against God's will). As God desires that man should live, He allows man to respond to His word which encounters man in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. "God raised Christ from the dead." Believe this and you too will live.

This affirmation probably constituted the earliest baptismal confession. Baptism, then, is an act of faith.¹⁰ Acceptance of the word in faith is acceptance of the Lord who is speaking in it. One's self-understanding now includes the "word of the cross" as his own crucifixion. Being thus "in Christ" or "of Christ," the believer knows that God has brought him from death to life. Having died with Christ, the believer also shares in the resurrection.

⁹ Bultmann, Theology, op. cit., II, 201.

¹⁰ Ibid., I, 312-13.

2. Decision. To make himself open for the same act to take place within himself is for the believer to know decision. Decision implies (a certain amount of) freedom. Thus man is given freedom for the instant of decision. His future, as determined by his decision, may be one of condemnation or of mercy.¹¹ As each action involves a decision, every moment, then, is fraught with risk. The now alone has meaning. Yesterday's existence is abrogated. We have merely the situation, the actor, his judgment, and the now.

Though I have freedom at the instant of decision, I may use my freedom to lose my freedom by choosing to remain under the sentence of death. Yet the decision must be made. No one has a claim on God. Every man experiences the call to decision and repentance.¹²

Indeed, the necessity of decision constitutes the early Christian's understanding of his human nature.¹³ This is a crucial point in the thought-pattern of Bultmann. To pursue it, it unfolds thus: the future Kingdom of God is not a event in time. Neither is it a "metaphysical entity or condition." (Nothing is wrong with this present world that another realm of fancy need be constructed.

¹¹ Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 211.

¹² Ibid., p. 45.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 51-52.

God's creation is good. It is man who has corrupted it.) The future Kingdom is "God's future action," the power which calls every man to decision now. Man cannot hold himself aloof. He must make a choice.

To fail to do so is to deny one's humanity. With man's very humanity at stake, Jesus feels that this very hour is the critical last hour, every hour is the last hour. Jesus uses every device of mythology to drive home this point.¹⁴ It becomes imperative that man adheres to the divine absolute demand to obey God's will--the radical obedience that transcends even the Scriptural word. It is observed that Bultmann does not explicitly identify Jesus' message with that of modern Christianity, but rather contrasts it with the prevalent view.

We have labeled this point as crucial for two reasons. First, it forms a basis for Bultmann's existential interpretation of Jesus' understanding of human nature and thus of meaningful existence. The imperative has no meaning to the hearer unless he understands that his very nature is at stake. Secondly, Bultmann justifies his appeal for a new interpretation of Scriptural content by the fact that the early Christian understanding of human existence (theology) is radically different from that of modern Christians. He feels that modern day human nature

¹⁴Ibid.

is assessed by the development of individual and definite capacities. "The life of the spirit is the true meaning of human existence" for modern man.¹⁵ Jesus did not share the modern conception of the intrinsic worth of humanity, but saw man as a sinner standing naked before God. Any "value" which man might have was given him by his judicious decision. To decide for God is to decide for meaning in life. Aside from this decision, (as Dr. Cobb has demonstrated using terms of Heidegger),¹⁶ Bultmann recognizes no authentic existence. The believer attributes his decision for faith to God.

We should remark at this time that both Bultmann's understanding of the early Christian's understanding of existence and his own existential understanding are essentially harmonious with this paper. A critical assessment may unearth points of divergence, but unless they are pointedly relevant to the central issue of meaning and the afterlife, we need not dwell on them here. As Bultmann stops short of this consideration, we shall have to take due note of that fact in the evaluation concluding this chapter.

We proceed now to discuss the third item showing Bultmann's scheme for complete reception of the proclamation.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁶Cobb, op. cit.

3. Will. Primitive Christianity did not hold to the traditional Greek belief concerning man as a microcosmos of the macrocosmos. Man's essential being is not reason or spirit, but will. To be a man means to will, to strive for something. As obedience is the proper attitude toward God, Jesus teaches that the essential part of man is the will. Because man's will is evil, the whole man is evil. Because man is evil, he perceives the world as evil. For Jesus, the world is not evil, but man. Further, this stems not from any lower nature, but from will.¹⁷ God and the world are not hostile. Hence, the world is not deprived of meaning because of a dualistic pessimism of a spirit entrapped in a worldly body (Greek).

Secondly, evil is not negativity (Greek), but is something positive, disobedience against God, positive opposition to the will of God.

Thirdly, Paul is correctly understood as saying that man cannot will the good. Man's meager efforts lead him either to boast of his minor accomplishments, or to despair of ever reaching the mark. Man must surrender to the will of God and stop his prideful seeking of something to boast about: either wisdom (Greek) or righteousness (Hebrew).

¹⁷Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, op. cit., p. 49; Jesus, op. cit., p. 49.

These three affirmations reveal that the will, being the key to faith, is a primary consideration for meaningful existence. Love, too, is an act of the will, and not an emotion.¹⁸ Because this is so, we can be commanded to love. Because one surrenders to the will of God, he can employ the forgiveness necessary to show love for the neighbor.

4. Restoration. Before man can be freed from his past and obtain openness for the future, he needs to be restored to his true self through the redemption accomplished in Christ.¹⁹ Redemption is wrought through adherence to the word, a present reality wrought by God in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Yet the word for Christianity is not the summons to repentance that takes the gnostic form of the freeing of an imprisoned and pre-existent soul;²⁰ it is the summons to repentance from the old self, which must die on the cross that the authentic self might be freed. In faith, (clinging to the gospel message), one must realize his creatureliness and guilt, must surrender his boasting for obedience, must accept the scandalous fact of a crucified

¹⁸Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 118.

¹⁹Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, op. cit., p. 189.

²⁰The Hebrews never shared the concept of a soul which takes flight. The soul, nephesh, was the animating principle, the life--usually found in the blood.

Lord.

In Gnosticism, the true self, the spark, was freed. In Christianity, man was freed for his true self by being freed from himself, tainted by the guilt of the past. The Christian is saved through his faith, his receiving the word of preaching.

What the foregoing implies is that the complete reception of faith provides a new existence in the now. The Christian's new existence is described both by Paul and by Ignatius with the term pneuma. Both understood faith as a purely existential matter. The Christian hope is for "rightwising" (justification) by faith. This is accomplished through the gifts of grace (Paul) and love (John) which make a man radically new, restoring him to right relationship with God. Without God's grace he falls victim to sin and death. (Death, as we have stated, is meaningless life estranged from God.)²¹ The new man finds release from transitoriness and death. This is the essence of salvation: "life and rescue from death." For Paul and John, "life" is a present reality. The present is full of the future's power.²²

The inroads of Persian dualism hampered the idea of God's power. The present age (inclusive of the past) was

²¹Bultmann, Theology, op. cit., II, p. 158.

²²Ibid.

made void of God's presence in an intense yearning for the future. The greater the yearning for the future, the more intense present sufferings appeared to be. Secondly, dualism cut the present off from the future, which is inextricably interwoven with it and derives its hope from it.

Jesus marked the decisive turning point. Yet "Jesus did not speak of his death and resurrection as redemptive acts."²³ He spoke not of a way of forgiveness, but of His word which proclaims forgiveness. He did not view Himself as a "personality," but as the bearer of God's word, assuring man of forgiveness. Hence, reception of the word--faith--brings forgiveness.

Now in the words of Bultmann, we may summarize the New Testament understanding of the essential meaning of human life:

Man stands under the necessity of decision before God, is confronted by the demand of the will of God, which must be comprehended in each concrete moment and obeyed.²⁴

Faith, an eschatological existence. Bultmann duly views the Christian as one called out of this world, yet constrained to live in it. The "between" of this predicament certainly implies two possible modes of existence: a

²³Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 214.

²⁴Ibid., p. 101.

present and a future, a here and a hereafter, an indicative and an imperative. The indicative implies that one "no longer" belongs to the old eon; the imperative that one is "not yet" free from existence in it. Both point to the new eon which is the Kingdom of God.²⁵ The "no longer" and "not yet" are justifiably understood as qualities of existence in the now which lift one from a life of "nothingness;" but does that go far enough? To what does everything point if not to the fulfillment in a resurrection following natural death?

Already we have observed that Bultmann interprets Paul and John as understanding Christ's appearance as an eschatological event, one which moves the believer over from death into life. Now we must ask what is the archetypal pattern for the believer if it is not this same Christ, crucified, dead, and resurrected? Are we to consider the death of the archetype as a "qualitative" mode of existence? Or as the termination of biological existence? (Or both?)

Indeed, Bultmann is not overly concerned with the archetype. He starts Christianity with the disciples and the Easter faith. This is to avoid the complication of saying that God acted in the historical Jesus existentially; or that God disrupted the normal sequence of

²⁵ Bultmann, Theology, op. cit., II, p. 203.

worldly phenomena.²⁶ (This incidentally points up the necessity for continuing the quest of the historical Jesus.) But Bultmann is quite willing to concede that Paul stood convinced of the resurrection, and that the preaching proclaimed "the risen Lord was he who had previously died on the cross."²⁷ How the Easter faith arose in the disciples, however, is not of basic importance to Bultmann, for he feels that the tradition had been "obscured by legend."²⁸

We have the word, but not the word made flesh. We have the kernel, but we are not allowed the ear of corn from which it has fallen. We are left "between," being invoked not to ask, "Between where?"

Methodologically, Bultmann would extricate the kerygma and theology from their archaic cosmological and eschatological orientations. These serve to obscure the kerygmatic proclamation that God has acted for man in Jesus Christ. He would ask, How can there be believing of the kerygma (faith) when it is not readily discernible? And without the kerygma, how can modern man gain a self-understanding (theology)?²⁹

²⁶Cobb, op. cit., p. 249.

²⁷Bultmann, Theology, op. cit., I. p. 82.

²⁸Ibid., p. 45.

²⁹Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 132.

Bultmann says, demythologize, bare the kernel, that once more a radically transcendent God may be understood as confronting man with a radical decision of faith. Bultmann would accomplish this through an alliance with Heideggerian anthropology.³⁰ This philosophy so completely grasps modern man's existential self-understanding that it would serve as an acceptable vehicle for critically carrying the thought patterns of, say, Paul.

A noble endeavor admirably undertaken by a worthy scholar. The danger, of course, is in determining the essential from the non-essential. A further instance of the between of the present and the future may point up this difficulty: the "Kingdom of God," since it is eschatological, is supernatural.³¹ For Bultmann, that which is supernatural is perceived only by the eyes of faith. The "saints," the disciples, availing themselves of a faith-portrait viewed themselves as under the indicative and the imperative--as rejecting the present world and having their life in "the beyond."

Beyond where? Beyond the grave, certainly. Beyond the mere transitoriness of life without God, certainly. Both. Demythologizing, in clarifying the answers, has a duty to the questions also. This Bultmann readily

³⁰ Cobb, op. cit., pp. 227-58.

³¹ Bultmann, Jesus, op. cit., p. 132.

concedes; but surely the question of survival after death forms an important fragment (if not the core) of faith. It is the one thing which early Christians, late Christians, and possibly even Christian existentialists share in common. It might well provide the tie that binds the old understanding to the new.

Man indeed stands under the hour of decision, the positive effect of which places him between two worlds. He is continually called upon to transcend himself in reaching for more humanity, in realizing that his human nature is at stake. Bultmann is to be commended for being a flagbearer in this race against time. But the momentum of Bultmann threatens to carry him completely over the mark he is striving to reach. Modernizing the hopeful union with the Heavenly Father through the overcoming of death may dwell overly on spiritual life and death; but it must sooner or later harken back to the "messiah" to whom the earthly faith pointed, he who "returning on the clouds of heaven" would confirm the message that natural death has truly lost its sting.

Under no circumstances is Bultmann to be understood as denying either the validity or the importance of the future, however. It is more a matter of his interpretation, and hence of emphasis, which leads to our significant difference with him--he does not go far enough. We too find that God's grace gives man freedom, openness for

the future, that "every decision in life involves a renewal of the decision of faith."³² That it is inherent solely in a reception of the preaching seems an issue best consigned to another paper. It is enough to concede that the freedom given man in the encounter, an acting upon the proclamation, gives the willingness to accept fate (inclusive of suffering).

Bultmann does not interpret Paul as postulating a remote future "in fantastic cosmic terms." God's grace merely implies the "permanent futurity" of God, always there before man arrives.³³ This futurity is described as a permanent state because as the unworldly will never be completely possessed, the Christian's openness to the futurity of God lies in the combination of the faded Old Testament hope for "the God who comes," and the New Testament fulfillment of "the God who is present." He stands ever at a distance (the future), yet his love allows the believer to span this distance (the present) and know meaningful existence.

The future determines existence in the present. Man cannot even imagine the joy which the future holds for him; therefore, Christ rejects the images of apocalypticism. Hope abounds in the prospective "revealing" of

³²Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, op. cit., p. 204.

³³Ibid., p. 208.

Christ, before whom believers will one day stand as saints. Hope also looks forward to the life which with Christ will then be revealed. Yet the greater emphasis is upon salvation as a present state, more than an anticipation of future salvation.³⁴

Thus, humanity is essentially openness to the future. Man must not bar his own way. In being open to the future, in absolute surrender to the will of God, grace allows one to accept even suffering as a token of God's grace. Paul, of course, spoke of a resurrection of the dead. But "life" is also a present reality in the Christian's openness for the future and his acceptance that the present must be determined by it.

So, we would hope that a logical conclusion to be drawn from Bultmann's analysis is that the Christian hope anticipates a future inclusive of communion with God, complete communion from the point of view of faith. Meanwhile, we are in agreement with Bultmann that Christianity differs from the mystery religions whose essential function it was to provide immortality. Gnostic dualism sought to return the fallen spark home. The Greeks considered man as Logos, a portion of the universal Logos that eventually reclaimed it. Christianity avowed that man must live in this world, but continually look to

³⁴

Bultmann, *Theology*, op. cit., II, 175.

God.³⁵

II. TILlich: MEANING THROUGH THE NEW EXISTENCE

Summarily, Tillich's position states that modern man is characterized by a situation of emptiness and meaninglessness occasioned by alienation and despair. From this position of anxiety, man may find relief in the good news that Christ has brought the New Being. While man acknowledges himself as separated from essence in existence, as subject to the tensions of polar elements within himself, in serious doubt concerning his very humanity, he may gain inspiration from the New Being brought by the Christ. Appearing under the conditions of existence and overcoming them, Christ gave to all the pattern of action for meaningful existence in God.³⁶

The threat of meaninglessness. The religious situation is the quest for the final source of meaning, for an unconscious faith which is lived rather than thought of. Though written almost forty years ago as a creative criticism of the spirit of capitalist society and a reinterpretation of the ethical task of religion,

³⁵Bultmann, Primitive Christianity, op. cit. p. 161.

³⁶Cobb, op. cit., p. 275.

The Religious Situation³⁷ still describes man's quest for authentic existence. Under the inroads of Idealistic Liberalism, man considered himself the center of thinking. Tillich's "belief-ful realism" helped reverse the trend of The Religious Situation. His reversion to God-centered thinking helped to bolster hopes shattered by the now dissolving liberal belief in progress. Belief-ful or Self-transcending Realism allows one to transcend the confines of Yes and No by seeing himself concretely in history, and calling upon an inner strength to uphold him.

To speak of human existence is to speak of the structure of being (philosophy) and of the meaning of being (theology). The two disciplines are interrelated in such a manner that one who seeks Christian answers to existential questions must forever be both in and out of the traditional circle of theology. Tillich's Method of Correlation seeks to provide answers to man's existential questions by combining speculative philosophy with apologetic theology.³⁸

The philosopher who attempts to answer existential questions by philosophy becomes a theologian. The theologian, in turn, must utilize the philosopher's presuppo-

³⁷Paul Tillich, The Religious Situation (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).

³⁸Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 8.

sitions and implications. For instance, the question which modern man is asking is the question of the loss of meaning through estrangement. Theology replies that the answer is the Christ.³⁹ Yet before delving into the answer, one must first survey the philosophical question of man's being, the question implied in every discussion of existence. The possibility of "being not" produces the question of being.⁴⁰

The world exists because of the dialectical participation of nonbeing in being. Being which includes nonbeing is finite being. It meets a definite end. Only being-itself is exempt from this fate, for only being-itself is without beginning and end. Tillich, Heidegger, and Sartre take nonbeing seriously. With Tillich, man participates not only in being, but also in nonbeing. Heidegger's "annihilating nothingness" views man's existence as "existential" because he is threatened with nonbeing in the form of death. For Sartre, nonbeing is inclusive of meaninglessness--the annihilation of the very structure of being.⁴¹

Along with the ontological quality of finitude is an

³⁹Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 186.

⁴¹Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (ed.), The Theology of Paul Tillich (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 156.

awareness of the ontological element of anxiety. "Anxiety is the existential awareness of nonbeing;"⁴² that is, the creature realizes that nonbeing is a part of its being. The necessary acceptance of finitude, the human lot, is the acceptance of anxiety. Hence, the basic anxiety is the threat of nonbeing. We cannot speak of nonbeing as "nothing," and thus remove it from all consideration. Nonbeing has qualities; it derives these from the being which it negates. It therefore follows that being is ontologically prior, and that nonbeing is dependent on the special qualities of being; but if being is a legitimate affirmation, then nonbeing is equally a legitimate negation.

Tillich lists three ways in which nonbeing threatens being: (1) ontically--man's self-affirmation experiences a threat to his being relatively in terms of fate, and absolutely in terms of death. In the face of fate and death, the "immortality of the soul" argument convinces no one, for one cannot dissociate the components of the self-world correlation. Disappearance of one side means disappearance of the other. Their common ground remains, but not their structural correlation. This fear of oblivion is present even when death does not pose an immediate

⁴²Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 35.

threat. It lurks in the rear, reminding all that in the movement from the past to the future, there is not a moment of time which does not vanish immediately.⁴³

(2) Morally--the threat which expresses itself relatively in terms of guilt, and absolutely in terms of condemnation. Man's negative judgments against himself, as he moves to fulfill his destiny, are experienced as guilt.⁴⁴

(3) Spiritually--the threat which expresses itself relatively in terms of emptiness, and absolutely in terms of meaninglessness. The loss of one's spiritual center is the loss of a meaning "which gives meaning to all meanings." It asserts itself in the form of total doubt, (not the healthy doubt implied in all spiritual life). Doubt is based on man's isolation from the whole of reality. Man compensates by "escaping from his freedom" (Fromm) by a group participation which affirms his spiritual meaning. The spiritual meaning is saved, but the self is lost. As man's being includes his relation to meanings, a threat to his spiritual being is a threat to his whole being.⁴⁵

All three forms of anxiety are interwoven. All are part of the existence of man in his finitude and estrangement. In their manifestations, they push man to the brink

⁴³Ibid., pp. 41-45

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 47-51.

of despair--the feeling of being unable to affirm one's nature because of the power of nonbeing. The three types of anxiety have flourished during different periods: ontic anxiety during ancient civilization; moral anxiety during the Middle Ages, spiritual anxiety during the modern period. We are primarily concerned with the last.

Man's spiritual anxiety manifests itself in a feeling of estrangement from himself, from others, from the ground of his being. The profundity of estrangement lies in the implication that one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged. Man's predicament is estrangement, but his estrangement is sin;⁴⁶ sin is the personal act of turning away from that to which one belongs.

The meaning of human existence can be symbolized by two lines: the vertical, pointing to the eternal meaning and demonstrating the mystical element; and the horizontal, pointing to the temporal realization of the eternal meaning and demonstrating the active element.⁴⁷ Every religion has both lines, emphasized in varying proportions. The horizontal line represents what we should be because of the effects of the vertical intrusion. The vertical line

⁴⁶ Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., II, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁷ Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 186-87.

allows one to continue "in spite of" apparent meaninglessness. It provides a "religious reservation" that refuses to be conquered. Without this line, human existence cannot maintain meaning. In other words, existence would be impossible without its ground. The ground of being is being-itself; yet being-itself is neither an abstraction nor a being. It is the "ground and power" of all that exists. As it alone deserves unconditional concern, being-itself is God.⁴⁸ This is the first affirmation to be made about Him.

Man's existence in God constitutes his essence, and hence the meaning of human existence. But man is in a "border situation"⁴⁹ because he is estranged from his essence. Human freedom involves him in the ambiguity of truth and falsehood, of authenticity and unauthenticity. He has freedom to decide for the good; and he must decide. He has made a decision even when he decides to escape from his freedom. This necessity of constant decision is the threatening aspect of existence.⁵⁰ To decide against the good is to know discord. (Further, the confusion of the inner life is aggravated by the conscious distortion of truth present in modern society.)

⁴⁸ Cobb, op. cit., pp. 270-71.

⁴⁹ Tillich, Protestant Era, op. cit., p. 197.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

The moral imperative to seek the good, the beautiful, the true is the law given by God. This law is man's essential nature. If man were not estranged from his essential existence in his actual existence, he would not experience the law as standing against him. It merely represents his true nature. Man, according to Tillich, is driven from his essence to his existence, from potentiality ("dreaming innocence") to actuality, by an "aroused" and finite freedom.⁵¹ The ambiguity of "The Fall" is made more lucid by Tillich's definition of life as separation and union, and therefore as love.⁵² Love and life exist only when there is a breach to be healed. Symbolically, this description extends even to the trinitarian interpretation of the living Good: God separates Himself from Himself in His Son, and reunites Himself with Himself in the Spirit.⁵³

Man's border situation implies that though freedom moves him to the fulfillment of all potentialities, he must still accept the religious obligation to overcome the polar tensions within himself and orient all his potentialities towards the one object of ultimate concern. When man moves his center from God (unbelief); when he seeks to become

⁵¹Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., I, pp. 31-35.

⁵²Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 107.

⁵³Ibid., p. 107.

universal (concupiscence); when he exalts himself (hubris); --he is creating a condition of estrangement, sin, and meaninglessness. The reason is that he moves too far toward one or the other of the polar elements inherent in his structure. For instance, in the ontological polarities of freedom and destiny,⁵⁴ under the conditions of estrangement, the separation of freedom leads to arbitrariness; destiny is distorted into mechanical necessity. What was normally a healthy tension between polar elements degenerates to feelings of suffering and loneliness under separation. Man has used his freedom to waste his freedom; and it is his destiny to lose his destiny. The same anxiety which pushes him to move toward existence may consume him in despair if he does not walk the boundary with care.

It is this perversion of human nature, not the ontological fact of finitude, which accounts for the cleavage in human existence.⁵⁵ The ontological anxiety of finitude is called the Urangst, a part of what it means to be human. The situation of existential anxiety is unique to man because man alone has self-determination. The man of today is "an autonomous man who has become insecure in

⁵⁴The other two polarities are dynamics and form, individualization and participation. Systematic Theology, op. cit., II, pp. 62-65.

⁵⁵Tillich, The Protestant Era, op. cit., p. 165.

his autonomy."⁵⁶ He has no security in ideas concerning the meaning of his life. He has defied the "Protestant Principle" by absolutizing the relative, and relativizing the absolute. Tillich asserts that emptiness and meaninglessness have resulted from the breakdown of the absolute, together with the development of liberalism, democracy, and the onset of technical civilization, which is already in the beginning stages of its own disintegration and corruption.⁵⁷

Already we have spoken of man's existence under the two influences of the vertical and the horizontal. Hope unites the two lines. Hope applies the "in spite of" of the vertical to the tragedy of temporal existence. This world of hope is the ultimate word which religion must say to the people of our time. Religion can give meaning to our culture because religion is ultimate concern.⁵⁸ It is the state of being grasped by something unconditional, something holy. Faith, (in the classic definition of Tillich), is the state of being grasped by something unconditional which manifests itself to us as the ground

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 192.

⁵⁷ Tillich, Courage, op. cit., p. 61.

⁵⁸ Tillich, The Protestant Era, op. cit., p. 59

of our being.⁵⁹ The uncertainty inherent in faith cannot be eliminated, but the courage given in faith allows one to accept this doubt, allows one to accept his own being in spite of the powers of "nonbeing."

Before turning to an examination of how the courage implied in faith may usher in a new existence, mitigating man's existential anxiety and his ontological anxiety, we should note that man's alienation is so deep-seated that restoration cannot come from within him. Existential distortion (sin) has so severed the divine-human relationship that revelation comes to man instead of from him. No "religious consciousness" of man can elicit the presence of the divine.⁶⁰ Such is human existence under the threat of meaninglessness.

Meaning through the new being. Modern man requires a radical reorientation to God--to the God who is experienced not as one being among other existent beings, but as the God who is expressed whenever man feels ultimate concern. When man is driven to this "Ground and Abyss," he experiences real meaning.

This is true because the unconditional is the ground of meaning. As such, God injects meaning into temporal

⁵⁹Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 1.

⁶⁰Kegley, op. cit., p. 110.

existence at certain prescribed times. Kairos (the "right" time, fulfilled time) implies that perceptions vary and hence the revelation of God keeps abreast of these changing perceptions.⁶¹ Kairos refers to "every turning point in history in which the eternal judges and transforms the temporal."⁶² In the kairoi new creative possibilities appear. Conditions of existence must be in accord with the right time; but the one Kairos which illuminates all history is Jesus Christ.⁶³ The "New Being" completely eliminates any dualism between cultural and ecclesiastical theology by relating the new reality to all forms of human existence. Christ, by appearing at the right time, gave meaning, direction, periodization, and qualitative difference to time. The good in time appeared in one moment of time, creating a center of history by dividing it into a period of preparation and a period of reception. The old creation is no longer valid, for it no longer exists "at the right time" in the special historical moment.⁶⁴

Christianity acknowledges this revelation as the

⁶¹Tillich differs radically from Barth in affirming that man's reception of revelation conditions it.

⁶²Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., I, 136.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Tillich, The Protestant Era, op. cit., pp. 28, 38.

final revelation, final in the sense of being decisive, fulfilling, unsurpassable, the last genuine one. This must be so, because the revelation originates within the theological circle and faith interprets this light as revealing ultimately the mystery of being. As the essence of illumination, it becomes the "norm" for all theological interpretation.⁶⁵ In upholding the norm as the "New Being in Jesus as the Christ," the Church accedes to Christ's transparency to the ground of being and to the pattern of action which we all are to follow. Those who are threatened with despair may find hope in knowing that God transforms the lives of those who are in Christ.

We have this assurance because Christ has shown what can be accomplished when one allows himself to be the instrument of God. His life was the answer to all questions implied in existence. Tillich rejects the naturalistic view that answers can be developed out of human existence; he rejects the supernaturalistic view that the Christian message is a sum of revealed truths "which have fallen into the human situation like strange bodies from a strange world."⁶⁶ That is why the statement--Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ--is the central story of the Gospel: here was the embodiment of concrete existence overcome by one

⁶⁵Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., I, p. 50.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 64.

empowered by God to establish His reign in the world. This overcoming of existence under the conditions of existence also explains another fact: the Biblical historical Christ gives a certainty through a faith portrait that is quite independent of the historical critical Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was merely and supremely the medium, essential manhood in existence. Essential manhood is Godmanhood, having the power of negating itself without losing itself.⁶⁷

It was the final kairos of Christ which gives meaning to lesser kairoi. Even as the Cross represents the struggle between existence and essential being, the Resurrection the triumph of the New Being over the destructiveness of existence, so each believer must be willing to submit himself to his own cross and kairos. Kairos creates possibilities requiring decisions. Behind every creative possibility lie ultimate religious decisions. Every moment of man's existence he may use his finite freedom to embrace the new mode of existence. Intuitive faith may grasp the unconditional which breaks into the conditional. This is the "Gestalt of Grace." Participation in it makes creative action possible.⁶⁸

Faith may grasp the unconditional. Man has a choice. We have mentioned "intuitive" faith because Tillich feels

⁶⁷Kegley, op. cit., pp. 236-238.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 73, 74.

that man is driven toward faith by an inner "restlessness of heart." As faith is a centered act of the personality, and as every man has a center, every man has an ultimate concern. Yet this subjective side cannot exist without the objective side--the object toward which it is directed. However, the only ultimate concern is God. Lesser concerns are idolatrous and plunge man into despair. This follows inevitably, because faith, being the centered act of the personality, causes the loss of the center in "existential disappointment" when it is directed toward false ultimate concerns.⁶⁹

In the true faith which creates openness to God, man receives through grace a courage sufficient to cope with ontological anxiety (Urangst) and with estrangement. Even as Urangst is ontological, so is the courage which may arise to combat it. This power enables one to find meaning in the present. Man is finite and contingent, but this courage still enables one to achieve a degree of self-reliance by taking finitude and anxiety into itself. These latter cannot be removed, but they can be absorbed. In interpreting faith through an analysis of courage, Tillich departs from the tradition (as early as Ambrose) of blending courage with faith and hope.

The courage to be is one's affirmation of his being

⁶⁹Tillich, *Dynamics*, op. cit., pp. 9-12.

in spite of the threat of nonbeing; those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation.⁷⁰ Now if courage is the self-affirmation of being in spite of nonbeing, and if the subject of this self-affirmation is the self, then we understand that the self has two sides:

(1) The self as a participant. There is no self without a world to which it belongs and is separated from at the same time. This is what participation means. Hence, self-affirmation also includes the affirmation of the power of being in which one participates. This is the "courage to be as a part." Communism demonstrates this type of courage where instead of individual anxiety there is anxiety about the collective. Doubt is never allowed to gain a foothold, so the anxiety of meaninglessness is not actualized. American courage extols the affirmation of oneself as a participant in the creative development of mankind. However, the anxiety of doubt is always to the front. It always asks of the characteristic American productivity, "for what?"⁷¹

(2) The self as an individual is the second polar element of the self. Called forth by enslavement under primitive collectivism, individualism "is the self-affirmation of the

⁷⁰Tillich, The Courage To Be, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 86, 111.

individual as individual self without regard to its participation in the world." Individualization has moved through successive stages: the Renaissance, Reformation, Pietism, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Bohemianism, Naturalism, and finally Existentialism--the climax of the movement toward the courage to be as oneself.

Yet both types of courage point to a solution which transcends the failings of each. The courage to be as a part loses one in collectivism. The courage to be as oneself places one in danger of losing his world by self-affirmation of oneself as an individual. What is indicated is the courage to accept acceptance. Hence, the courage to be is "the courage to accept oneself as accepted in spite of being unacceptable."⁷² This provides the courage of confidence. Not confidence in a collective, nor in oneself, but in one's ground of being.

But where does courage enter? One needs a self-transcending courage to accept this acceptance. The courage of confidence in the new existence brought by the Christ overcomes the anxiety of guilt, fate, and doubt. Such courage takes meaninglessness into itself. God's acceptance of that which deserves refusal is justification. Acceptance of this acceptance is faith, the state of being grasped by the power of being-itself. This faith (or

⁷²Ibid., p. 164.

courage) is possible because initially one is drawn into the power of the New Being in Christ. God provides the grace; man accepts it through faith.⁷³ Revelation and the existential decision, then, are the foundation of this courage.

Faith can resist meaninglessness if one accepts the condition of despair. "The act of accepting meaninglessness is in itself a meaningful act. It is an act of faith."⁷⁴ The paradox is understandable only when one sees that meaning implies meaninglessness, even as being implies nonbeing. How do we explain the prevalence of being over nonbeing? Only the existential answer of faith or courage is possible. The courage inherent in faith knows that the infinite is present and overcomes it.⁷⁵ Faith gives confidence.

Ultimately, "the courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."⁷⁶ Thus, our source of the courage to be is the "God above God."

In overview, Tillich would conclude that the meaning of life is fulfillment and joy. Fulfillment as in the

⁷³Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., II, p. 179.

⁷⁴Tillich, The Courage To Be, op. cit., pp. 175-76.

⁷⁵Tillich, Love, op. cit., p. 39.

⁷⁶Tillich, Courage, op. cit., p. 190.

completion of oneself in a movement of what seems to be real to what is really real, the unity of the self which allows the maximum actualization of potentialities; joy as in the outgrowth of blessedness.⁷⁷

Eternal fulfillment must emphasize the now. When God Himself appears in a moment of time in Jesus Christ, the vanity of striving, the endless circle of existence, the "flux of time," are all overcome. This moment of time hallows all time by placing it in the perspective of eternity. The new significance of time means no longer a horizontal projection into the future, but a vertical projection above, "where eternity affirms it." Thus, God makes of our time the time of fulfillment.⁷⁸

Only when we join the existentialists in realizing that we are timed, that human activity and timing are vain, are we open "for the message of the eternal appearing in time and elevating time to eternity." Then the ultimate significance of each passing moment (each moment with its demands, threats, promises) enables one to say "yes" in spite of the futility of human toil. The fulfillment of time allows us to look through to the things unseen, the

⁷⁷Paul Tillich, The New Being (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 151.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 167.

eternal things.⁷⁹

Tillich equates eternity and fulfillment. One is fulfilled in his outgoing altruistic love for another, in conformity with life in the New Being. This gives meaning to existence.

Like Bultmann, Tillich acknowledges the importance of the future; but the Christian hope for the future takes such a deliteralized form that the earlier anticipation is almost lost. Tillich views eternal life and the Kingdom of God as man's relation in history to meaning (through the ground of meaning) which transcends history. On the problem of hope for ultimate fulfillment when history proves that death precedes the realization of fulfillment, he tries to meet the issue with his doctrine of kairos: God is the fulfillment intended in every moment of history.

This is quite true. But the intended is the extenuating circumstance. If it simply doesn't take, what then?

In his recent Volume III of "Systematic Theology," Tillich differentiates between the "end" of history as the qualitative aspect called eternal life, and the "end" of history as the finish of things temporal; that is, between aim (telos) and finish, between eternity and time. We

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 168-69.

stand now under the qualitative aspect of the eternal; we look forward to the future end of the temporal.⁸⁰ It is apparent that Tillich takes seriously at least one component of the future as real time. This is clouded, however, by his statement that "the ever present end of history elevates the positive content of history into eternity at the same time that it excludes the negative from participation in it."⁸¹ The "ever present end" implies that the temporal too is but engulfed in the now. History is elevated to eternity, purified of the negative, even as the believer is ever-presently elevated to eternal life.

This purging of the negative, we agree, is what is meant by the Day of Judgment prevalent in religions; but we wonder if the religions intended the here and now as the only time of the permanent transition of the temporal to the eternal?

What does Tillich really mean by eternal life? Eternal life, immortality, and resurrection are terms signifying the individual's participation in eternity. Tillich accepts the term "immortality" as long as it remains a symbol.⁸² In its symbolic connotation, it is

⁸⁰ Tillich, Systematic Theology, op. cit., III, p. 396.

⁸¹ Ibid., III., 397.

⁸² Ibid., III, pp. 410-11.

equivalent to what Tillich means by the symbol of eternal life: the ever present realization of the essential in man. But Tillich rejects the term "immortality" when it becomes a concept, that is, when it speculates concerning a "life hereafter," an immortality to the soul. "Participation in eternity is not life hereafter."⁸³ Of course not; not if one accepts Tillich's view of the eschaton and the exclusiveness of the now. The end of time is a process going on in every moment, in Tillich's thinking. The resurrection is merely another way of designating the New Being, rising out of the death of the old one.⁸⁴ Summarily, for Tillich, eternal life is life "in" God. The "in" refers to the actualization and essentialization of everything that has being.

We could not leave the philosopher-theologian without noting his ontological analysis of a factor already mentioned but stressed only by inference--love. Love is not an emotion. Understood in its ontological status it is viewed in unity with power and justice and in constant conflict with them. Power is the possibility of self-affirmation in spite of negation.⁸⁵ Justice is the form in

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., III, p. 414.

⁸⁵Tillich, Love, op. cit., p. 40.

which the power of being actualizes itself.⁸⁶ Love is the driving power towards reunion of the estranged.⁸⁷ To make it a mere emotion would be to rob it of its capability of effecting either justice or power: love is the foundation of power, the principle of justice. Essentially they are united; in existence they are separated and conflicting. Being-itself implies love, power, and justice. One who is wholly transparent to the ground of being witnesses the union of these essences in human existence.⁸⁸ Such, of course, was the New Being, the key to the problem of meaninglessness. In the kairos these attributes are revealed in the light of what they can be.

III. CRITICISM

What we are faced with is the need for an outlook for the future. In the light of Bultmann's approach to meaning through faith, and Tillich's approach through the New Being, we gain some insight regarding the tremendous importance of the present moment. An extremely valuable contribution has been made by the Christian existentialists and their urgent call for decision. Yet the future as consummation plays only a minimal role in their views, (if any

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

at all), and that is cause for concern. If ours is truly a temporal existence, then we must view it as eventually coming to an end. Thus the mere fact of temporality gives to the future component of time a reality which will not tolerate a lessening of its importance.

The future cannot be minimized if we are to speak of God's overlordship. If the providence of God is to have any reality, then it must lie in the purposeful movement of creation according to some divine plan. How could we believe otherwise and still speak of a God of intelligence? If purposiveness is not a divine trait, then it is utter nonsense to say that man requires it as his most meaningful value.

Then the emphasis is on God's plan and not man's salvation. The latter is a portion of the former, but as it proceeds from God's initiative in His will and in His love, the emphasis must be correctly placed on God, not man. Life in the Kingdom of God refers to the realization of God's inmost will. Bultmann's reduction of statements of faith to self-understanding is moving too far towards subjectivism. He has shifted the emphasis from the theocentric theme (the Kingdom of God) to the anthropocentric theme (salvation). Barth's insistence that man's place in the Bible is second to that of God is greatly mitigated by Bultmann's primary concern with man, and with God only in so far as man is capable of comprehending himself in God.

Of course, man cannot be eliminated from the equation, but neither can God be reduced in His objectivity without robbing man of the external orientation he so badly needs.

It is the nature of God that He directs history toward a goal. We are referring to this goal as the Kingdom of God, secure in the belief that a God without a telos is only the construction of a distorted theology. This goal has been reached only in part through the event of the Cross; the glory of fulfillment is yet an expected thing.

Bultmann's existential analysis of faith as self-understanding strips the eschatological outlook of the New Testament of much of its essence. In the worthy attempt at demythologizing for modern understanding, Bultmann places primitive eschatology within the framework of Jewish apocalyptic and hence proceeds to a reinterpretation. Yet New Testament eschatology was not founded so much on Jewish eschatology as on Jesus the Christ. Both Paul and John base hope upon the Christ-event. Bultmann's faith is allowably subjective, but at the same time it should be theocentric and related to the historical event of Jesus. It appears presumptuous of Bultmann to assume that modern man is no longer capable of believing in the eschatological consummation of world history. This is a form of scepticism which fails to take seriously the New Testament hope in its stated form and content.

Time is indeed viewed subjectively from within the framework of one's own relationship with it, but one commits grievous error when he minimizes the past and future dimensions of time. Linear time is equally as important as existential time. Both derive significance from the event of Christ. Not only is Christ relevant to the existential moment, but He also points the way to an eschatological future. Time, eternity, and the end can never suffer the subordination of the past and the future into the present. To make of the now the only real time is to sacrifice the quantity of time for the quality of time. Such an action might be understandable if one were forced to a choice; but the Biblical portrait of Jesus pictures Him as affirming the reality of both: an already and a not yet.

The Christian existentialists stumble in making the past and the future unreal, except as they are brought into the vertically infused present. What is required is an objective intrusion which relates historic time to eternity. Time requires other than a temporal source of meaning, and this is the strength of existential time. But the supra-temporal quality of time does not swallow up horizontal time; it merely imbues it with meaning by elevating it to a higher dimension. That is, the past is hallowed if the lessons derived from it are applied to the present; the future is hallowed if it gives promise of the continuance

of meaningful moments experienced in the present.

In the preceding discussion of Bultmann's approach through faith, we were led inexorably to consider his subjective analysis of hope. Eschatology no longer relies on the message of the coming kingdom, but on man's "radical understanding" of himself in a predicament of crisis, where every moment is the last moment filled with decision and danger. Such an interpretation does scant justice to Paul, whose kerygma of the future is eliminated. God's communication must indeed be coupled with man's self-understanding; but God's self-communication readily lends itself to an orthodox objectivism which telescopes a hope for a future consummation quite independent of whether man accepts it or not.

Where Bultmann swallows up hope in faith, Tillich couples faith and hope with love. Tillich assumes that this is a perfect situation, and hence God's Kingdom. This is an undue strain on love, to ask it to compensate for a future of hope. Love is still the greatest of virtues; but love in its essence is still hidden from human observation, even as Christ's glory was concealed in the form of His servanthood. The latter we have known, the former we hope for. It is God's telos to reveal this glory. Our eschatological existence is based upon our eschatological hope as demonstrated by Paul in Romans 8:38-39: nothing shall separate us from the fulfillment

of the glory and love of God. Nothing. Not even death.

In both Bultmann and Tillich, the future component of God's redemptive plan plays such a minimal role that it is all but lost in the hallowing of the present "moment of decision." We agree with Brunner that our eschatology is grounded in the future hope that God will accomplish that which our faith yet yearns for, complete communication with God, and God's complete communication with Himself. The sincere disciple of Christ bemoans the fact that he is not sufficiently developed to the point where he can detect God's fulfilling presence in the present, and that he must look to a future event in hope. But that's the way it is. As faith and hope turn upon each other, we cannot affirm faith without affirming hope. "According as a man has or has not this hope, he is, or is not, a christian."⁸⁹

Paul Tillich attributes reality to the past and to the future in seeing these two dimensions as confirmed in the present (kairos). Yet Tillich should concede that the kairos based on the divine ekstasis does not reach fulfillment until its culmination in the eschaton. It is senseless to speak of meaningful moments which persist if these moments do not persist toward some meaningful goal. Further, Tillich's supratemporal intrusion of the New

⁸⁹ Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and Consummation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 204.

Being is hardly adequate to convey the impression of eternity or the hallowing of time: the New Being is not actual, only symbolic.

The actual Jesus of history pointed history toward an eschaton which gives significance to history and existence. Bultmann leaves the future open, but without a goal; Tillich's New Being stops short of being forever. It is the future toward which Jesus pointed that gives meaning to the present. This is a future which allows one to see beyond the limitations of the suffering and misery experienced in the present moment. It is a future which creates optimism through the knowledge that the door is open to life. Without this future hope, present life is fruitless, senseless, and meaningless.

William Ernest Hocking agrees that meaningful existence demands the affirmation of life after death. Like others, Hocking is concerned with the problem of human freedom; but his point of departure is a freedom from, not a freedom to--a freedom from death which brings in its train a freedom to life. The freedom to life is merely the aftermath of the freedom from death. In the view of Hocking, the meaning of life and the meaning of death are inseparable.⁹⁰ Death gives freedom, for as long as a person is dominated by an inescapable will to live, he is not

⁹⁰ William Ernest Hocking, Thoughts on Death and Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937) pp. 8-9.

free. True life dawns with true freedom from the fear of death.

Yet the fear of death cannot be set aside unless one views himself as a survivor. The self simply does not contemplate its own extinction.⁹¹ Hocking feels that the interest in survival springs not from desire for a specific object, but for a subject. The continuance of the subject is paramount, for a world devoid of conscious subjects is a meaningless world. For Hocking, the survival of such subjects seems the foundation for preserving the meaning of things.

To strain at meaning without the future hope is but a vain effort. The Christian existentialist is no exception. If he truly believes in God, then he will not shut the door to any possibility open to God. Perhaps this thought sustains him as he ignores the pressing question of the afterlife. Who is to say that the secret hope for life is not that which even now allows him to affirm the present with such conviction?

⁹¹Ibid., p. 86.

CHAPTER V

MEANING IN GOD WITH A FUTURE HOPE

I. RECAPITULATION

We have defined meaningful existence as purposeful orientation to eternal values. We have defined the Christian hope as the expectation of present and future participation in eternal life. That the fullness of meaning is impossible without the Christian hope has been certified through an investigation of other approaches to meaning.

The preliminary step was to establish that meaninglessness is indeed a real problem. A large segment of modern literature and art has revealed an eloquent analysis of the human condition as wholly lacking in meaning. The nihilistic atheist has been shown to be unjustified in his pessimistic diagnosis; yet he is apparently justified in his conclusion if his basic premise is accepted: if life is meaningless, the talk of meaning is absurd. We have accepted this.

However, the views of the atheistic humanist have been rejected on two counts: not only does the humanist share in the nihilist's view of meaninglessness, a view which we repudiate; but he also attempts to bring meaning out of the situation which he declares to be meaningless.

We have attempted to show (1) the impossibility of existence without purposiveness (meaning), and (2) the impossibility of man imparting objective meaning to himself. That is, man requires meaning, yet all the ingenuity of man cannot give to him a meaning which he lacks--not through acceptance of despair, nor through a creative movement to "progress," nor through a mystic approach to sex. Under no circumstances can a finite being create something when he has nothing to begin with. The hope for eternal life is that which orients a person toward an external goal, God. The Christian hope sustains during a time of intense suffering, and it is vindicated if the hallowed suffering should end in death.

That suffering does frequently end in death, that life is often filled with adversity, makes the views of the Christian existentialist partially unsatisfactory. We say partially, because the Christian existentialist is decidedly correct when he points to God as the external source of meaning; yet he falls short of the mark in deemphasizing the importance of God's future. The call to decision does indeed make every moment of extreme importance, but the present moment would have no meaning unless the experiencer of that moment were preserved eternally. Unless there is a telos, what does the moment point to? No moment is complete within itself, because man's innate hunger for survival forces him to contemplate

tomorrow.

And the "New Being," as it gains inspiration from the Christ, will not be fulfilling, if it lacks a resurrection like that of Christ's. The new existence merely becomes an emboldening power, arming one for the battle with death.

Then if meaningful existence requires the objective reference which is God, if meaningful existence requires a future hope even when within God, the final step is to inquire whether a future hope is a justifiable and realizable hope. If it is, then the formula for meaningful existence is complete, and the parish minister will be free to show the implications of the afterlife for life and for death.

This present chapter, then, is aptly titled, "Meaning in God with a Future Hope:" if reasonable intimations are presented to show that the afterlife actually exists, the avenue to meaningful existence must lie herein, no other avenue having successfully withstood careful analysis. If the Christian hope is to be proved valid, then consideration will have to be given the arguments against the future life. These include Corliss Lamont's rejection of the historic form which the resurrection body has taken in Christianity, and the popular argument that concern for the future is detrimental to concern for the present.

Having entered into dialogue with these arguments

against the afterlife, the next step is to present the "arguments" for the afterlife. Of course, to speak of "arguments" is really to speak of "intimations," for the final certification of the afterlife is more a matter of faith (and experience) than of philosophical argument. Yet faith has intellectual content, and this content may be presented here.

Finally, in the conviction that the leadings given by God are sufficient to substantiate the hope for life after death, we inquire whether life after death is desirable. Even if it does exist, how do we know that it transcends mere tediousness? It is to the consideration of all these matters that we now turn our attention.

II. ARGUMENTS AGAINST A FUTURE HOPE

Lamont's opposition to the resurrection body. Corliss Lamont struggles to show that not only is belief in immortality an illusion, but it is also harmful. His central thesis is that it is best not only to disbelieve in immortality, but to believe in mortality.¹ He shows how immortalists since time immemorial have shown the need for the unity of the body-personality in the afterlife. The body has taken many forms in the course of thinking: some

¹Corliss Lamont, The Illusion of Immortality (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p. 282.

thinkers have advocated the restoration of the natural body; some have set forth a spiritual body; some have postulated an immortal soul, itself material and hence already clothed, etc.; Lamont has labored to show the inadequacies of all systems advanced. For instance, science has denied the rational possibility of the natural body's restoration; the advocates of the spiritual body have not solved the question of how reunion with loved ones (the immortalists' "dream") can be accomplished with other than a feeling body. Lamont has concluded that the Christian resurrection body is of necessity a glorified body, a transformed natural body, else the personality so essential to meaningful survival is no longer personality--for one of the prime shapers of personality is the natural body under the influences of environment and society.² For instance, specific changes in the physical structure of the body bring specific changes in personality. If personality is allied with the body, when the body dies, all dies.³

It is necessary to digress momentarily to discuss a facet of immortality mentioned by Lamont: survival of the personality. Lamont is accurate and fair in stating that

²Ibid., p. 64.

³Ibid., p. 5.

this is essentially what Christians mean by immortality. Immortality has assumed many forms during the speculation concerning another dimension of existence. Spinoza and Santayana speak of an ideal immortality, the attainment of a quality of existence that is independent of time and existence. Others have affirmed the survival of an impersonal psychic entity which is absorbed into some kind of All. Material or chemical immortality witnesses nature's recall of the elements in the body. Historical immortality represents the contribution made by every life to the truth of existence. Biological or plasmic immortality is accomplished through one's children and descendants. Social or influential immortality represents the survival of the effects of one's life on the minds of succeeding generations. Eternal recurrence extols the return of all things over and over again in their precise detail.⁴

These several types may appear in conjunction with each other or with what is for us the primary type--the continuation of the individual personality. This last type must be accepted as what we mean by immortality, for, as Lamont has shown, the continuance of some being transcending my consciousness but going by my "name" is wholly meaningless. Christianity posits communion, not union. Christianity seeks not the extinction of personality in the

⁴ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

"drop of water into the sea," but the face-to-face confrontation of personality with Personality.

Nor does Christian "immortality" mean "not-death." Homer drew this logical conclusion and had his heroes take their bodies with them to the beyond. They did not die, but went on living like and with the gods, the only true "immortals."⁵ The Christian believes that man actually dies, but that God resurrects the essential part of him to new life. This essential part goes under the name of "personality."

To return to his refutations, Lamont illustrates what he considers the failings of psychological dualism: (1) an immortal spirit can hardly exist in a mortal body without becoming tainted; (2) it is difficult to draw a dividing line between what is spirit and what is body, for the two do not actually exist in any form of separation; (3) a final difficulty of dualism concerns defects: for instance, will defects of the mind, (which decidedly contributes to personality) be wiped away at death? Lamont feels that most dualistic immortalists will answer Yes. Then how does a genius enter heaven with his genius still intact? Can we really postulate change in some instances without postulating change in all? Further, shall we deed immortality only to present man, or to

⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

pre-man also? To the animal kingdom to which man is so closely related? And what level of animals? What of vegetables, since there is no hard line between animals and vegetables?⁶

In the light of the foregoing dualistic weaknesses, Lamont advocates a monistic psychology. Thought, or mind, or personality, has no separate existence that takes flight from a body upon death. "Man is a unified whole of mind-body or personality-body."⁷ We cannot retort that personality takes on a spiritual body; for Lamont insists that it is this natural body that is inseparable from personality. John Baillie's argument that the natural body is renewed every seven years anyway, and that God will simply provide a final renewal, is rejected by Lamont as ridiculous. In the final analysis, because of the extremes into which dualism leads us, because all theories of personal survival violate the principles of monistic psychology, Lamont concludes that "we cannot do otherwise than give up entirely the idea of immortality."⁸ When death occurs, man's monistic existence completely comes to an end. The joy of this discovery is that though we can no longer hope for any paradise of "blissful recompense" beyond the grave, we

⁶ Ibid., pp. 105ff, 122.

⁷ Ibid., p. 113.

⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

are also removed from the fear of any hell or "bottomless pit of torment" such as was posed by ancient Sheol.⁹

With some finality, Lamont concludes that the only God who could conjure up a separate body for a separated personality, and then provide an immortality which defies His own decree of death for all things, is the old-fashioned type of miracle-worker God. "This is the only kind of God who can fulfill the heart's desire of the modern immortalist."¹⁰

Lamont's penetrating analysis can be ignored only at the risk of intellectual dishonesty. He can never be answered finally, for he demands a proof that comes from within the circle of faith. Conceded, (1) we speak of survival of the personality--of the capacities for thinking, feeling, willing, oughting, and knowing. Conceded, (2) we do not speak of a disembodied spirit, as with the Greeks, but of a monistic survival of a spiritual body which houses the personality. Conceded, (3) the spiritual body is other than the flesh and blood body which participates in the shaping of the personality.

But we are not willing to concede that the Easter-event was due merely to "a myth of a resurrection prevalent in a pre-scientific society." We do not so wholeheartedly

⁹Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 204.

reject supernaturalism that we accept only the findings of pure reason and natural science. Faith has a reason of its own. Faith may utilize intimation; science utilizes proofs. It seems unfair for Lamont to place the burden of proof on the immortalist to combat science. If science has thrown down the gauntlet, let science conclusively disprove immortality. Science will find itself arguing from the same givens as does the immortalist--from intimations. Belief in immortality does not "trample reason underfoot," for immortality proceeds from different a priori assertions. In spite of Lamont's designation of Kant's reasoning as the substitution of wish for proof,¹¹ Kant's hypothesis still stands: God, freedom, and immortality proceed from different premises than do concerns of pure reason. Understood in this light, concerns of faith and concerns of reason need not conflict.

Not only has Lamont failed to distinguish properly between faith and its knowledge and science and its knowledge, but also between a legitimate hope and an illegitimate wish. He fully understands the necessity for not only attacking the form of the traditional belief, but also the source. Yet his attributing the resurrection to "myth" is hardly conclusive enough to dispel the hope which sprang from it. It was more than mere wish that led

¹¹Ibid., p. 6.

early Christians to believe that they could have a resurrection like that of Jesus. Spinoza's ascription of a "symbolic" death to Jesus does not embrace the entire truth. We must seriously ponder whether Christianity could have been founded upon a symbol, whether its progenitors were so extremely symbolically oriented.

The assurance that they were not worshipping a symbol leads us to contest Lamont even on his understanding of the three vital concessions we have made to him. These concessions were necessary, because they do indeed form the crux of what Christians believe concerning survival. They also embody the elements of Lamont's criticism.

The first consideration is the survival of those traits which make man human, the capacities which constitute personality. Lamont claims that they perish absolutely. Science is correct in maintaining that perishing takes place at death. The Christian believes this also, but what type of perishing takes place? Dust indeed remains dust. But does not energy also remain energy? Is energy eliminated at death, or is it only the integration of the persisting elements which is eliminated? What assurance have we that the capacities for thinking, feeling, willing, oughting, and knowing are not modes of energy? How can we know that the resurrection does not provide a new integration for these? What is death? Extinction? Or reintegration?

Can the feeling or willing content of man be capsuled? Of course not. Then how are we to know what form it takes? If we do not know even the form of personality, how can we know the form of its perishing? How can we know that it perishes irredeemably? Lamont answers that we know because the body perishes irredeemably. This view we consider in due time; but while we speak of the survival of the personality, how much seriousness are we to attach to Lamont's question concerning the survival of vegetables, plants, the lowest forms of life, etc.? Lamont acknowledges that Christians speak of the survival of the personality. As he is well-intentioned, he obviously thinks that plants are imbued with personality--the capacities for thinking, feeling, willing, oughting, and knowing. If Lamont's rational approach reveals this to be true, then we happily concede the possibility of a plant heaven where cacti may blissfully pursue the goal of prickly perfection.

As to the form of the body which resurrection grants, the second consideration, Lamont has struck at a vital point. Can we speak of a spiritual body and of a monistic survival of personality at the same time? Those inside the circle of faith must presently be content to leave that matter in the hands of Him who supplies the resurrection. We shall continue to cling to the survival of the "spiritual body." If the integration of "personality" means "life," then God will surely find some way not only to

preserve the life, but to clothe it.

Yet Lamont deserves more than the proclamation of a trust which he does not share. Therefore, we would ask him, Is repentance an actuality? Of course it is. One can usually change his mind or his course of action through will. Then is the self-conscious self the same after the act of repentance? No, though the self-conscious self is still aware of its own existence, the self in the new existence is no longer what it was in the old. Else, why talk of repentance? Then is the Christian absurd in repentance that wills the good for his God? No, that is his privilege. Does the Christian's repentance alter his identity, making him a new self in God? Yes. Is he yet a monism? Yes. Can we speak of him as being in a new dimension? Perhaps. Then why is it absurd to speak of a new monistic dimension of self-conscious and perfected (or perfecting) life beyond the temporal, now altered through spiritual repentance? Bear in mind, the point is not that life after death exists. Who shall convince Lamont of this? The point is that monistic survival through the spiritual body is far from an absurdity.

What has happened is that Lamont has attacked Christianity at a point where knowledge is admittedly limited. It is one thing to talk about the resurrection. It is quite another thing to talk about the resurrection body. The Christian can only reach into his Judaic

heritage to note that body and soul, corpus and life, are integral. They are good since they come from God. Yet time revealed the promise of a hope for life transcending the shadowy existence in Sheol. Time also revealed that the fleshly body would no longer be required for existence in the new spiritual realm. But talk of the soul deserting the body was anathema to the Hebraic-Christian, even in the light of a new spiritual existence. Hence, the "spiritual" body seemed to fill all requirements.

To speak of the immortality of the soul implies a dichotomy at variance with the Judeo-Christian heritage. Soul and body as separate entities form a belief springing from primitive animism, where an object was thought to be inhabited by a spirit.¹² Plato intellectualized this concept, making of the soul the ego, divine and immortal; the body, a prison. This thinking has pervaded Christianity's foundations; yet the Bible speaks of man as a psychological unit. Meaning for man is not determined by the nature of soul and body, but by his relation to God.¹³ Hence, the will is the center of man. The will is the prime shaper of personality and spiritual values.

¹²T. A. Kantonen, Life After Death (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 7.

¹³The Bible does not have a metaphysics of the soul. The soul is simply the life of the creature. Man's rebellion resulted in the separation of the creature from the Creator.

The body is preserved primarily to preserve spiritual values; therefore, the emphasis is on the values, and not on the packaging. Lamont argues that the values cannot survive because the "package" does not exist. The Christian, of course, denies this. The "spiritual body" stands for (1) the richer existence in the future; and (2) the continuance of individuality, distinctions, intellectual activity, etc.; for an immortality of Reason alone (the Greek belief) would obliterate all individuality. Thus, the spiritual body but reflects the hope that God will provide a new and higher life for the self-conscious being who adheres to His will.

How strange it is that Lamont should so readily accept the tentative conclusions of science regarding something as mysterious as personality, yet refuse even to accede to the possibility of spiritual continuance. He is in the position of rejecting the "supernaturalism" of the spiritual body, but of accepting the near "supernaturalism" of personality.

How is spiritual recognition of loved ones possible after death? In answer to this question, we may state that even in this life our kinship with each other is based upon a spiritual recognition, not a physical one alone. As we are to be clothed in spiritual bodies, we shall know each

other in a communion of spirit with spirit.¹⁴ We need not go to the excess of citing instances of recent explorations in mental telepathy. Many people will readily concede that spiritual communion is at least a possibility.

The final consideration is Lamont's contention that immortality is disproved because the fleshly body, a principal former of the personality, is destroyed at death. How, then, can we say that personality survives without saying that the soul is separated from the body?

Let us ask of Lamont: Are there other influences on personality beside the body? Yes. Would these influences include such things as parental teachings, the dedicated instruction of loving parents? Yes. Does the possibility exist that the personality (the self) would become intricately involved with (perhaps dependent upon) the ones who guide and shape it? Yes. What is the fate of the self when death takes these important persons away? Usually the self lives on. Then, is one's corpus totally a different situation? If the flesh is taken away, is not a new integration possible, in the light of the new situation of death?

Are the influences of the mortal body upon the spirit really the final word? If they are, then the

¹⁴John Sutherland Bonnell, Heaven and Hell (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 51.

Biblical imperatives to transcend the illicit yearnings of the flesh are impossible of achievement. The greater influence upon the human spirit is the Holy Spirit of God. The center of man's spirit is the will. If man subjects his will to the will of God, then God is the sole influence upon man's spirit. Man's personality, his capacity for willing, is revived from death, even though the body perishes. Man remains a monism of will. The body is the Christian reference for whatever means God uses to cloak this regenerated being.

Monistic psychology is not violated, as long as it understands its limitations. It is limited in understanding the things of man. It is infinitely more limited in understanding the things of God. Monistic psychology has no extensive purview in the spiritual realm. Man's monistic existence may indeed come to an end in death; but death is merely an opportunity for God to open the gateway to a reorientation of elements for a continued existence within Him.

The argument that concern for the future distracts one from concern for the present. This is a second protest against the afterlife. Actually, this view is more a display of lack of interest than an "argument" against life after death. Whether or not one is concerned with the afterlife has nothing to do with its actual existence. Yet

we are concerned here with meaningful existence, and meaningful existence is concerned with people. For those people who erroneously misplace their concern, the after-life does not exist, for all intents and purposes: to live without the realization that the future is essential to the present means that one can never hope to enjoy the fullness of meaning. The fullness of meaning lies in a present which anticipates God's future.

Many people have robbed themselves of a purposeful orientation within the context of God's future. They have done this by blinding themselves to anything except present concerns. They have adopted the "one world at a time" attitude, an attitude which denies that any two dimensions of time can be compatible. Consequently, when the present is threatening, they feel that their entire world has come to an end. Their strict devotion to the present often hinges upon the misconception that concern for the future mitigates concern for the present.

Strangely enough, those who rob themselves of a purposeful orientation in this manner are denying the very thing which they seek. That is, they seek purposiveness; and they seek it through a singleness of mind. They think to concentrate all their energies upon the immediate challenge. They fail to understand that intelligent concern for the future does not dissipate their energies. Concern for the future bolsters their energies by giving

them a light at the end of the road.

Perhaps those who harbor misconceptions concerning the afterlife will more readily embrace it if they can be convinced that the afterlife is not only harmonious with the present life, but is also essential to it.

To conceive of life after death as the ultimate fulfillment of meaning need not distract one from life in the present. On the contrary, if it is a true ultimate, the afterlife will have the opposite effect. It is the nature of ultimates that their presences can be assumed; thus, overt concern with them does not occupy the valuable time that might be more fruitfully utilized. Tillich, for instance, speaks of religion as ultimate concern. Religion confesses (or should confess) that it is the duty of religion to eliminate the need for religion. Even with the ultimate of ultimates, God, one may aspire to such a state where conscious dwelling on the ground of existence will be obliterated through a transparency that concentrates primarily upon existence itself. God is "moved" to the unconscious and conditions every reflex of the consciousness.

The afterlife, a portion of God's promise, merely conditions life in the present. One's waking thoughts are concentrated elsewhere. We may note the early Hebrews who with the Law were never capable of moving God to the holy place of unconscious observance. The Law failed in the

sense that it became an end in itself, rather than a means of orientation to God, the ultimate fulfillment of the Law.

Consider the Christian who jubilantly affirms: "I know that my redeemer lives!" What is the man's action subsequent to this comforting discovery? To act as if he knows it. The light shines. It does not talk about shining. Hope fulfills. It does not talk about fulfilling. If God lives, then hope lives. Serene in this knowledge, one may courageously pursue temporal existence under God's abiding care.

In the presence of the two Biblical strains concerning the present and the future, we may detect at least three approaches toward the consideration of the relatedness of the present and the future in God.

1. Time as redemptive history. Oscar Cullman has absorbed historical time into redemptive historical time. The latter is an upward sloping line with the Christ-event at the mid-point. Redemptive history is God's redemptive plan. Redemptive history has a twofold character: (1) salvation is a continuous time process, stretching from creation to consummation. Past, present, and future are included, and revelation takes place along the course of this line.
- (2) All points of this line are related to the unrepeatable historical fact at the mid-point. This fact is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Redemptive history thus forms a redemptive line which includes an unlimited time in

the forward direction.¹⁵

2. Time as primarily future. Where Cullman makes eschatology secondary, Edwyn Bevan describes the linear process culminating in God as essentially eschatological. According to him, the whole meaning of the time-process receives its ultimate value from the end to which it is moving, the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God.¹⁶ (We must criticize Bevan and the "Futurists," because they fail to understand that the time of fulfillment has already started. Perhaps their saving virtue is that they consider seriously the future component of time. At any rate, the promised fulfillment was not to occur in a far distant future, but in the first century; so the orientation of the futurists is decidedly one-sided.)

3. Promise and fulfillment in Jesus. Kümmel, by linking Jesus with the Son of Man, connects the present with the expected future--the same one who walks among you now will judge you "in that day." The future is a present reality, in that one's decision now is binding upon him at the future event of the final judgment. The promise is fulfilled. The promised gift is yet to be bestowed.¹⁷

¹⁵Oscar Cullman, Christ and Time (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 45-53.

¹⁶Edwyn Bevan, The Hope of a World to Come (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1930), pp. 48, 62.

¹⁷Werner Kümmel, Promise and Fulfillment (Naperville: Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1956), pp. 39, 47, 54.

So the future remains a vital part of the promise of God. Not only is concern for the future in harmony with concern for this present life, it is necessary for the fulfillment of meaning.

It would have been necessary to demonstrate to the Puritan mentality the presence in embryo of God's Kingdom. The Puritan viewed life as a pilgrimage, its sufferings to be endured in the hope of blessed peace with God beyond the grave. It is necessary to demonstrate to moderns the futurity which climaxes a life which is intensely concerned with the present. To say that the latter is a reaction against the former is far from an adequate explanation; the "why" of the reaction is possibly due to a number of factors. Here we submit that one of these factors is that New Testament statements relate the present and the future in the closest fashion. Depending upon time and circumstances, the faithful may lean toward one side or the other with the assurance of Biblical support.

Regarding time, we have spoken of the two strains which are evident throughout the New Testament. The present is spoken of as revealing the future as salvation and judgment. The future is spoken of as lighting up the present and making of today the day of decision. The Jewish hope of God's Kingdom is the acknowledgment of Yahweh's reign and the surety of His triumph. Jesus mirrored this thinking: God's Kingdom means God's future

and victory.¹⁸

Future intimations include "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10); ". . . until I drink it in the kingdom" (Mk. 14:25; Matt. 26:29); ". . . whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matt. 16:19).

Present intimations include "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk. 17:20). The Gospel of John is insistent that eternal life begins in the now (Jn. 11:26; 20:31; etc.), and comes through the gnosis of supernatural revelation (Jn. 17:3).¹⁹ Paul speaks of proof and not of hope alone: "If in this life we who are in Christ have only hope, we are of all men most to be pitied" (I Cor. 15:19; italics mine). The proof is in Christ: "Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15:12).

So we have adequate grounds for stating that in the New Testament the present and the future, ideal and reality, are wedded together. Each is essential to the other. The world progresses toward an appointed goal, but a Christianized world would show a foretaste of heaven, of the things God has in store for us. Christians already

¹⁸ Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), p. 65.

¹⁹ See Ernest Cadman Colwell and Eric Lane Titus, The Gospel of the Spirit (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953).

partake of the heavenly life. They await the fulfillment.

II. ARGUMENTS FOR A FUTURE HOPE

As previously stated, we must refer to arguments for the afterlife as "intimations" rather than "proofs." The arguments are leadings given to us by God that He intends that we should endure. Those who stand outside the Christian circle, those who stand within the circle but are opposed to this tenet of the faith, will find but minimal meaning in all "arguments" for Christian immortality. The Church has always held to belief in another existence. In a way of speaking, the Church was founded upon such a belief. Then the Church is its own proof. All that we can advance beyond the confines of the Church and Scripture are extra-Biblical "intimations" drawn from our view of the relationship between God and man.

The wide-spread yearning for life. The first intimation that the afterlife exists and is necessary to meaning is an almost universal longing for the survival of death. Men have always believed in life after death. Such, of course, may merely be mass wishful thinking. The yearning does not verify the existence of that which is yearned for. On the other hand, the desire may reflect the revelation of God's will through those media of God inscrutable to man. The instinct fulfillment argument,

in its classic form, assumes that God has given to man an "instinct" to live happily after death. As we have seen, Lamont objects that one cannot turn a wish for a life beyond into alleged proof. Ought cannot be transferred into must. True, wishing does not make it so, but hoping is often more solidly based. It may stem from a primordial instinct, or from speculation concerning the nature of the object of hope (in this case, God). At any rate, the burden of proof for setting aside the mass yearning may very well rest with the sceptic.

Belief in life after death has been held all over the world from all time since man became a thinking being. Primitive man of all cultures shared a concept of the departed as shades, shadows, or "ghosts." By the time of the sixth century B.C., the Orphics were viewing the body as a tomb confining the soul; Socrates was reflecting this doctrine in defining the soul as consciousness; Plato was similarly echoing this view in contributing the doctrine that all souls are indestructible.²⁰ Dreams were possibly the originating point for the form of the belief in life after death, for men believed they went to strange places.²¹ Olympianism, as pictured by Homer and Hesiod,

²⁰ John Baillie, And the Life Everlasting (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 52-53.

²¹ W. O. E. Oesterley, Immortality and the Unseen World (New York: MacMillan, 1921), p. 190.

withered and died because it held a doctrine that refused to allow men an immortality. Immortality was for the Gods alone. The mystic religions, on the other hand, flourished because of the inspiration of eventual union, of continuity with the divine. Again we note that reunion with God does not equal life after death in the classical Christian sense. The Christian anticipates communion. The early Greeks sought union.

The intense desire of the self for reunion with God, the Orphic view, certainly includes a psychological cause. The advent of self-conscious individuality necessarily occasions a severance from the common life; simultaneously, a conflict arises between our self-assertive instincts and "conscience," the common consciousness inherent in each of us. We designate as the "body" those forces which destroy the harmony normally enjoyed in integration. We call the "soul" the common consciousness to which we sense that we belong. This soul, weakened by its isolation, longs for the pure condition of undivided union.²² Though this Orphic view of life subscribed to cyclic recurrence and the classical conception of a soul imprisoned in a material body, the essential point remains that the part of man which belongs to God is still "an exile from God and a

²²F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 180.

wanderer."

The Babylonians had their Underworld, the Greeks their Hades, the Romans their Orcus, the Hebrews Sheol. We are particularly concerned with the Hebrew beliefs, as these form the basis of our Judeo-Christian heritage. The Hebrews shared with the Greeks the primitive animistic "ghostly" survival. Death took the form of "continued existence" in Sheol. The Hebrews, like all ancients, held to the three-storied universe, but Sheol was pure emptiness. Man was created to live. Death is the result of his rebellion against God. It is man's own fault.

Prophetic Judaism revealed that existence in Sheol is non-moral and heathen, and hence non-Godly. The prophets shifted the emphasis from the corporate nation to the individual. Hence individual communion with God was the seed which was later (500 years) to bud into the belief that nothing could separate the saved from this holy communion.²³

However varied the conceptions of the soul were, the nephesh continued to exist after the death of the man. (This "existence" in Sheol is not to be equated with living. It is "nothingness"). Nephesh may be interpreted soul, if it is taken to mean life, and not in its Greek sense of a separate entity. In the Biblical narrative

²³ John Baillie, op. cit., p. 119.

(Gen. 2:7), God breathed into man's nostrils "the breath (nēshmāh) of life, and man became a living soul (nephesh)." The breath is the principle of life; the soul is the life. The breath, the principle of life, is the same in all living creatures. The soul is individual, different in every person. The breath is given by God. (Ruach--wind, hence, breath--generally refers to human beings). When the ruach is withdrawn, the man dies; the nephesh "lives on" in the shadowy not-land of Sheol.

The nēshmāh, given by God to man and beast alike, had temporarily joined the nephesh to the body. The nephesh was located in the blood. It could enter and leave the body at will during a man's life and for twelve months after his death. Upon death, the ruach returned to God, the nephesh went to Sheol.

After the return from exile, the hope dawned that the righteous have more to look forward to than a ghostly existence in Sheol. The body would be restored, the soul brought back to animate it. The belief in the resurrection, then, became a protest against the older view (still rampant among the Sadducees) of a meaningless existence apart from God; further, the return to life in the fleshly body was required that the righteous ones might share in

the Messianic Kingdom on earth.²⁴ Jesus affirms this better-than-Sheol existence in Mk. 12:18. But even as He repudiates the Sadducees, He also repudiates the crude flesh and blood resurrection of apocalypticism. Instead of merely repeating this life, the future life will transcend all earthly experience.²⁵ For the Christian, the promise of immortality is the promise of Jesus Christ: "Because I live, ye shall live also" (Jn. 14:19).

Between the ninth and fourth centuries B.C., the Greek and the Hebrew held essentially the same view of the afterlife. It was that of a shadow land where one is beyond the reach of God's goodness. We have seen that the Greeks called it Hades and the Hebrews called it Sheol. This rough equivalence of what we call hell, separately arrived at, further moderates any belief that the ancients were merely engaging in "wishful thinking" in postulating a life after death.

The great point of difference is the Greek belief in "the divine in man." This divinity, of course, is immortal; hence, at least that part of man survived. The Hebrew, on the contrary, was ever mindful of the gulf

²⁴Burnett H. Streeter, et al, Immortality (London: MacMillan, 1925), pp. 91-93.

²⁵The early Church continued to cling to the pre-Christian idea of a flesh and blood resurrection. This has colored somewhat the tradition of the resurrection.

separating God and man. The Greek would assume that immortality is a part of man's nature; the Hebrew, that man's fate is entirely in the hands of God. Beneath these differences, however, is found a common intimation of immortality--the feeling that man is not born to die utterly and completely. Neither Greek nor Hebrew accepted that the corrupted corpse was the end. The life, the soul, psyche (Greek), or nephesh (Hebrew), is not dead. The gloom and desolation of Hades-Sheol was anxiety-creating. It is unlikely that anyone looked forward to life in such a stark existence. The fact simply was that the life survived.

The theme of F. M. Cornford's excellent book is that physis, that underlying and comprising the soul and God, is ultimately and in origin a representation of the social consciousness.²⁶ Collectively, men have yearned to be a part of the all inclusive process of nature. They have participated in the unknown all-mind first on a group level, and then on an individual level. The hope was for an eventual union with the same. Speculation on the substrata of all things extended to Thales, who proposed that it was water; Anaximander, "the indefinite," a continuing return through birth and perishing; Anaximenes, air; Empedocles, love. The individual soul yearned for

²⁶

See Cornford, op. cit.

union with this variously described God.

Socrates, in Plato's Phaedo, was inclined to consider death a friend, if the imprisoned soul could be freed.²⁷ He had hope that death was not nothingness. Plato felt that souls are like ideas, eternal and having power. Aristotle argued that ideas are not souls, but forms having no power. He restored reality to the phenomenal world. God was made the pure abstract form, pure thought without matter. He became utterly transcendent and above the normal concerns of nature and of men. Where once the social consciousness had sought a survival of the group, the individual was now left to soar on his own to the outer regions in search of life. Neo-Platonism was to go to the final extreme of mystical trance to seek union with the Absolute One. Hebrew and Greek beliefs gradually became fused in later Christianity.

The anxiety of death is integral to us. It is either put there by God, or suffered by God. It indicates man's "primal hunger" for a life persisting after death.²⁸

²⁷ Streeter feels that the belief in the immortality of the soul (of the Lord and Paul) was conceived along the lines of later Greek philosophy. Cullman demonstrates that the two were essentially different--for the Greeks, death was a friend. For the Hebrews, death was an enemy finally overcome by Christ. See Oscar Cullman, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead (London: Epworth Press, 1958).

²⁸ Carrol E. Simcon, Is Death the End (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1959), p. 13.

Man's very nature seems to insist upon such a survival. The very anxiety of death results from the conflict between this inner insistence and what seems to be our fate--that we perish. The horror of death remains an eternal reality. Christian and non-Christian alike tremble in its presence. "Who can endure in the day of his coming?" We feel the horror of death not only because our finitude is defined, but because we are forced to acknowledge the jurisdiction of a Grand Court whose dominion we had previously refused to acknowledge. Yet the Christian's fear marks the beginning of his wisdom, for his apology to the tribunal is that he did not jeer at a Cross on a hill called Golgotha.²⁹

Christianity, with its hope, outstrips all other religions. The authentic Christian hope of eternal life must indeed enjoy a considerable following. Statistics show that Christianity, exceeded in youth only by Islam, has more adherents than the combined total of any other two world religions.³⁰ Shintoism is often cited as an example of a thriving "religion" that has neither an afterlife nor a doctrine of salvation. Yet its followers are normally Buddhists also. The Easterner has no

²⁹Paul Elmen, The Restoration of Meaning to Contemporary Life (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 110-12.

³⁰Loraine Boettner, The Millennium (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 42-43.

compunction about embracing the best in other religions, or about affiliating simultaneously with several religions. Shintoism extolled the national and family heritag; Confucianism offered a social ethic geared to the present; Buddhism was to provide for the future. At a time when the people of Ceylon, Burma, and Southeast Asia, India, China, Thailand, and Japan were longing for a future hope, Buddhism filled the void. The monk aspired to Nirvana; the common man to Heaven (Swarga). Christianity has succeeded because it recognizes that man obstinately refuses to follow a road that he knows to be blocked. Because he exercises critical faculties, man demands that the minimum requirements for fulfillment are an open road, and an assurance that we can see ultimate meaning. Deprived of an "absolute" light, life would no longer continue its peaceful cycle. Deprived of this source of its impetus, "it would disintegrate from nausea or revolt and crumble into dust."³¹

Kant's moral argument. The second argument for the afterlife is the classic argument of Kant: life beyond death is required to allow further movement toward moral perfection. Immanuel Kant finds meaningful existence in a dutiful progression toward true happiness and moral per-

³¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man (London: Harper and Row, 1959), pp. 228-231.

fection; as these two are present in just proportion only in another existence, Kant argues that fulfilled meaning must include this other existence, that God has mysteriously endowed His creature with the imperative to seek the highest good. This imperative is detected naturally through the use of practical reason.

In the ethics of Kant, practical or natural reason is exalted above intellectual, or human reason, and provides a moral certainty in religion. Religion is concerned with a supersensuous reality transcending the confines of scientific knowledge. Negatively, this limitation means that intellectual reason can provide no knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality. Positively stated, Kant's ethical works formulate not a denial of knowledge concerning the existence of these, but a "making room for faith."³² If man is always in the full knowledge of his destiny, he has no scope for the exercise of his practical faith.

Kant bases practical faith upon an "ought" which takes to itself a reason of its own. Man "ought" to enjoy the highest good, defined as the proper proportion between happiness and true virtue.³³ As happiness and virtue are

³² Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason: And Other Writings in Moral Philosophy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 13-14.

³³ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

only in disharmony in this life, as practical reason demands that they should be in harmony, there must be another life. God is the object of this rational faith. Thus, immortality is necessary to morality itself.

Reason dictates to the rational man that the goal of all his moral wishes is the highest good, the first condition of which is morality, and the second of which is happiness.³⁴ Traditionally, thinkers have concentrated on the latter condition. That philosophers of all times have been able "to find happiness in very just proportion to virtue in this life," the sensory world, is indeed strange to Kant.³⁵ He feels that virtue, the worthiness to be happy, is truly the supreme good; but the hope of worthiness has its basis only in continued participation in God.³⁶ Happiness itself transcends the "partial eyes" of the observer, who for himself is his own end. Happiness must be viewed from the standpoint of an "impartial reason" which regards all persons in this world as ends-in-themselves. So even those who consider themselves as having found the highest blend of virtue and happiness in this life have not found the perfect blend. The former moves comparatively, relative to a personal scale of values;

³⁴ Ibid., p. 219.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 232.

the latter is complete within itself and resides only in God and another existence.³⁷

Kant maintains that even if true happiness were attainable in this life, the highest good would still lack its more essential ingredient, morality. When the will of man is in complete harmony with the moral law (morality), man exists in a state of holiness. As no rational being is capable of this perfection in the sensory world, practical reason dictates that the requirement of morality must be met in an endless progress toward consummation in another world. This infinite progress is meaningless without postulating the endurance of personality--the immortality of the soul. In progressing from the worse to the morally better, in seeking to improve his character, man may hope for the continuation of this progress, "even beyond this life."³⁸ For God's final end in creating the world was for the highest good, i.e., the moral law and happiness.³⁹

But why should man be moral? Kant says that this question is as unanswerable as the question why should man be free? Duty seems to be the stimulus, duty as seen in the light of God's "revelation to reason" (Hegel). Therefore, man's obligation to moral laws seems to flow from

³⁷ Ibid., p. 215.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 225-26.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

his own reason. Kant is fuzzy on the source of this moral concern; yet he is insistent in rejecting intuition or a supernatural infusion as sources. He speculates that an analysis of the teachings of environment plays the major role; that is, institutions such as home, church, school, etc., induce values into the individual in his becoming. Such an analysis would reveal that man's whole design and purpose is moral.⁴⁰

To condense Kant's thinking regarding meaningful existence, we may say that the human conscience cries out for more time to move toward moral perfection. That this time is allowed has no basis in any scientific fact; rather it is known by faith and by one's view of the nature of morality.⁴¹ To Kant, the survival of death is simply something that ought to be. This sense of "oughtness" is intrinsic to values and has its foundation in God. It is sui generis, distinct from and prior to knowledge.

An offshoot of the moral argument expresses man's desire to see the fulfillment of justice. It emphasizes that if there is an ultimate decency of things, then it follows that final justice will be done in a life after the present life: in the present life the righteous suffer,

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴¹ Hocking pushes the argument to the extreme of saying that rather than our duty to the universe, survival is the duty of the universe to us.

the wicked often prosper. Where and when is justice done? Man has a disinterested desire to see significance in pain and grief. Robbed of this significance, he experiences only meaninglessness.

The moral argument presupposes that the continued development of the spiritual nature, in which justice shall be vindicated, is more reasonable than its denial. The kernel of the argument is the contrast between the immensity of human capacity and the poorness of the attainment. The spiritual nature of man is as real as the bodily. If life is thought to include only the physical and chemical actions and reactions, then we have no good ground for supposing the continuance of unobservable spiritual values; but if life is thought of as inclusive of spirit, then we may infer that spirit, via mortality, comes nowhere near satisfaction in this life.

The argument presents itself so vividly that further explanation is superfluous. The Stoic participated in the justice of the universe and its rational structure. While the Christian hope gives man superiority over enslaving conditions in the external world, the Christian expects the justice of the Kingdom of God. The justice, if it is to be done, must be done under other than the present existence.

Kant may be subjected to the criticism that he introduces God primarily that the categorical imperative

might be fulfilled; that he continually emphasizes man and his longings, and not the desires of God, who is made secondary. What assurances have we, asks Corliss Lamont, that "the controlling forces of the universe recognize this moral law and have both the ability and the will to grant the immortality necessary for its consummation"?⁴²

To contest Lamont, of course, is only to post faith against counter-faith. That God has both the ability and the will to do what He has promised is no illusion to the man of faith. When questioned, such a man would only reply, "I know what I know." Faith allows a healthy doubt. But we must exercise extreme care in rejecting whatever certitude our faith affords. We may be reasonably certain that God has given to man a hunger for the good, a hunger for Himself. The hunger is not satisfied in mortal life. We unapologetically state that the source of man's moral concern is God. If this statement implies a supernatural infusion of values, then we accept the consequences to be drawn from the affirmation. The Christian does not hesitate to attribute the good which he wills to God.

The argument for self-fulfillment. In the wake of Kant's moral argument and the allied argument of the expectation of God's justice, is a host of variations of

⁴²Lamont, op. cit., p. 6.

the theme. One of the most frequently recurring is the argument that temporal existence does not allow self-fulfillment. The Kantian influence is at once apparent; but the variations of the original format are at least deserving of mention here.

The desire for self-fulfillment stresses the need of the continuance of life and the necessity of self-fulfillment for meaningful existence. "If man is potentially the noblest of all the Creator's works of art, he is also the most unfinished."⁴³ As the child of God, man is still in the nursery stage. There must be more. Belief in individual survival depends upon the way we view God. If God is like Christ, the personal immortality is completely proved. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

This life has given only a prelude to how much more is needed for self-fulfillment. If God is just, He will not give us a hunger that is all for nothing. Living according to God's desires means that God whets our appetites for more life than is included in this brief mortal span.

Men fear death; yet it is not death as the end of life which is so frightening, but death as an arbitrary end to an uncompleted work. Is one's work ever completed

⁴³Streeter, op. cit., p. 89.

on earth? No, God's work is never done. One is not too disturbed over death if he feels he has completed a fulfilled life; but the broken uncompleted life is tragic. Depth psychology has confirmed this theme.⁴⁴

As previously stated, the proof of personal survival rests on the Christian conception of God. The Christian knows that God is pleased to have values continue. The Spirit accomplishes this; that is, the spiritual body. Hence, the resurrection of the body. The good, the true, the beautiful, are indeed of the nature of "ought to be but are not." Tillich's affirmation that "values demand to be actualized in and through existence"⁴⁵ represents an attempt to bring the doctrine of values down from the claim that these values are beyond being and hence not ontological. Not only is God pleased to have values continue, but God gives us certitude concerning life after death through prayer, a living theology, a truer interpretation of experience, and a consideration of the goal of existence.⁴⁶

There is yet another aspect of self-fulfillment, an intimation of immortality given to us by God--it is the

⁴⁴See Andras Angyal, Foundations for a Science of Personality (New York: Commonwealth Fund, 1941), p. 355.

⁴⁵Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 60-61.

⁴⁶Lily Dougall, as appearing in Streeter, op. cit., p. 352.

urge to be creative. A man simply cannot reach his peak of creativity in the short period allotted to him. Surely God would not kill off a creature just beginning to do his best work for Him. Just as we are achieving our most mature view of life, we suffer the privation of death. Just as we are in a position to use a creative and accumulated wisdom, we are called to another existence. There seems adequate justification for believing that our God of life will make some allowance for continued creativity in this new existence. This is the Christian's hope, inferred from the Biblical promise of new life.

Scriptural arguments. In the New Testament, immortality belongs only to God and to Jesus Christ. Men "seek for immortality" (Rom. 2:27) and "put on immortality" (I Cor. 15:53-54). God can destroy both body and soul (Matt. 11:28). The promise of new life is meaningless until the old life has actually died. Faith alone assures us that we do not pass into oblivion. If life does not actually come to an end, then the promise of new life would be meaningless. Even in the light of God's desire that the creature be saved, the Christian concept of immortality is not an immortality which can simply be taken for granted.

Is there, then, life after death? No, not independently of God's action. Death is God's judgment upon

the sinner. Yet God's mercy is the other side of His judgment. The mercy of God gives the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23). Man cannot earn this gift; therefore, life after death cannot be taken for granted as an automatic continuation of life. The proper Christian question is, "Am I a new man in Christ and therefore assured that nothing, not even death, can separate me from Him?"⁴⁷ New Life is opposed to actual death.

The resurrection of Christ forms the center of the Church's teaching and its vitality. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain . . . and you are still in your sins" (I Cor. 15:14 ff). The apostles based the hope of life beyond the grave upon the resurrection. "If Christ has not been raised . . . then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished;" "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also" (Rom. 8:11). "By His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1:3).

A personal resurrection is the valid hope. Jesus' argument against the sceptical Sadducees still proves unanswerable: the Sadducees themselves continually spoke of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If the phrase

⁴⁷Kantonen, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

is to imply meaning at all, it must imply immortality for these Fathers; if individuals, and not the nation alone, are precious in God's sight, then our hope in God rests not upon the restoration of the nation alone, but the restoration of the individual as well. If the individual matters to God, he must share God's eternity. God will not scrap what is precious in His sight. This is the central premise of John Baillie and forms the backdrop of his excellent book.⁴⁸ The resurrection of Christ is not the only available ground for belief in immortality, however, for the Pharisees and their fathers believed prior to and lacking the confirmation of Jesus. But, as is implied, the resurrection was the final and glorious confirmation of what might have remained pure speculation.

It is hardly becoming of a Christian to await in a negative existence the promised resurrection. Human immortality gives life a positive content before the final resurrection, for the conquest of death is only one aspect of life after death. The other, as we have seen, is the "eternal life" which belongs to the present and comes to fulfillment in the future. "If the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his spirit which dwells in

⁴⁸ John Baillie, op. cit.

you" (Rom. 8:11).

With Paul the new life (Rom. 6:4) is not a power, not a quality, but new walking. This new walking, of course, can take place only in a new existence. The mystery religions had baptismal washings that made one a part of God, but Paul had walking, a matter of obedience and faith. Walking is in the future tense. The future begins now (Rom. 6:4); but fulfillment comes in the impending eschatological event, the last judgment (Rom. 6:5, 8, etc.). At that time our walking with God shall be complete. Until God brings history to a close, the justified believer may look forward in hope to his complete salvation from sin and death.

C. H. Dodd points to the strong (and solitary) basis of belief in an afterlife in Paul: the assurance of immortality drawn from our incorporation into Christ--"We know that Christ never dies after his resurrection from the dead--death has no more hold over him" (Rom. 6:9). We also believe that our own lives will never end (Rom. 6:11). Indeed, the belief was held so strongly by Paul that the Church at Thessalonica, and apparently at Corinth, received a great shock when some of its members died. Paul speaks of the resurrection in the future tense; the churches considered that members would be exempt from a bodily

death.⁴⁹

It was the death and resurrection of Christ which restored righteousness and goodness to man, who had lost his authentic self. Rom. 7:1-13 states that the "I" once had life eternal. The "I" lost life eternal when sin came alive and the "I" had to die. The commandment was meant to lead into life, but it led into death. Sin deceived the "I" and killed it (Rom. 7:7). The self (the "I") was replaced at its center by sin. Man, therefore, can no longer be called alive, but dead under the Law (Phil. 3:4-6). Through Christ, the true self has been restored to life, and nothing can separate the "I" from life, not even death.

Are we willing to accept as less primary and essential that which was primary and essential to Paul? Rom. 8:9-11 shows that the Spirit's presence is a guarantee of bodily as well as moral resurrection. Further, Rom. 8:23-25 reveals that the ground of the Christian hope is the inheritance which comes with our adoption as sons, the fulfillment of the first fruits of the Spirit. Our hoping involves a "waiting with patience." This, of necessity, implies God's future action. It is implicit in

⁴⁹C. H. Dodd, The Epistle of Paul to the Romans. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), pp. 88-89.

the explicit expectation of survival. C. K. Barrett⁵⁰ has shown that Paul's "patient endurance" (Rom. 2:7) is closely related to hope. It indicates the need to look beyond the present to the future, in order to see the full meaning of the present. Viewing the future as a future in God allows one to wait with patience, knowing that the things found in human being and doing are not the things which satisfy. God is the only source of glory, honor and incorruption (immortality).

The combination of all evidence in Christ. To accept that the Holy Scripture contains truth is not to accept that the Holy Scripture contains all truth. There are witnesses to the truth beyond the confines of the written Word. Historically, the Church set itself up as an instrument of truth. The Reformers sought to purge the institution of the demonic that had crept into it, absolutizing its truth claim through dogma and form, and despoiling the nucleus of truth at its center. A third instrument of truth has been personal experience. The God who comes to us validates to us the truths of Scripture and the Church. All three were combined in the historical personage of Jesus and in the faith portrait of Christ: the revelation through Jesus Christ is the sole

⁵⁰ C. K. Barrett, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 46-47.

foundation for the new covenant contained in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. His remembered presence, the spiritual embodiment of the Holy Spirit, led the early disciples to proclaim our hope for resurrection to the true life in God. Jesus Christ is the medium of God we experience in personal encounter, for when we "know" God, it is because God first knew us--He revealed what He is like through His Son. It is the Holy Spirit of this Son and the Father which comes to us when we yield to God's imperative to believe.

Believing in Christ is accepting His command to love God and to love one another. This true love does not take unto itself an object, for love does not objectify, or thingify. God is no object; neither is man. True love reaches out to subjects. Hence, in a mutual exchange of affection, we have what Buber calls an I-Thou encounter. The "thou" is preserved because the other person is made an end in himself, rather than a means to an end. The "I" is preserved because the lover is drawn out of himself to his highest nature--the nature of concern for another.

But how can we be certain that this is man's highest nature? We can be certain through Scriptural revelation, for in what is perhaps the first watershed of Biblical history, God was concerned for His people to the extent of leading them out of bondage to the powers of this world into the freedom of His worship. His demand is that

we respond in kind to this act of love and will. We can be certain through ecclesiastical revelation, for the very existence of a Church founded upon the germ of sacrificial love and persisting throughout the centuries is a measure of proof that the Church's foundation is sure. We can be certain through the revelation present in personal experience, for the sense of at-oneness with God and with ourselves which we feel in an act of outgoing service gives a satisfaction rarely duplicated. Scriptural revelation, ecclesiastical revelation, and the revelation of personal encounter are all united in Christ. He was concerned enough to surrender His life for another.

The Bible tells us so, the Church tells us so, personal experience tells us so: the encounter which is oriented to God has a dedication in care which leads it to the extreme of descending even into hell. Christ knew the perils of a life of dedication. He knew that the things of spirit are forever in a death struggle with the physical things of this world. He knew that triumph over the things of this world is inevitable through God's Spirit; but He knew also that triumph assumes many forms. The highest form is a love that lays down its very being for another. He accepted the surrender of His being on the Cross.

The story might have ended there, if man's inner eye were as sharply focused and as dramatically perceptive as his outer eye. The inner eye of faith would have known

that the Cross of suffering when overcome is but a stairway leading to God. In the glory of the Cross is the resurrection into life. The Cross implies its own redemption. Suffering which is hallowed implies its own survival. Life which is consecrated implies its own immortality. The assurance and conviction of this thing hoped for, this unseen thing of life, is revealed to the inner eye of faith.

But the outer eye, the organ of evidence for the honest sceptic, begs for a different type of witness. It demands an empty tomb and resurrection appearances to responsible agents. It challenges from the fertile ground of agnosticism that seeing is believing. Christ once-for-all accepted the challenge to His claim of eternal life. He beckons to the outer eye to witness the wounds inflicted for love. He invites the doubter to experience for himself the glorious scars of battle. Then He challenges the generations yet unborn to believe by seeing with the inner eye, to believe that He leads the way into the physical arena of Galilee, continually reminding us that there is no defeat, no death in God.

Jesus was resurrected to eternal life long before the cross-resurrection event. He was resurrected to God at whatever historic-divine moment it was when God said, "Thou art my beloved Son." That is why the resurrection was implied in the Cross. The resurrection was implied in

every act from the divine "Will you?" of God to the divine "Yes" of Jesus. It was implied in His agony at Gethsemane; it was implied in His zeal for the temple; it was implied in His message of repentance. Implied--but not actualized. Death is real. Until the physical world has moved to decay, the spiritual world cannot take complete command.

If we attune our wills in a dedication to the reality of the true life shown by Christ, then we too have the assurance that our dead lives will take on new meaning. We have the certainty that our hope for life will be realized in an existence beyond the grave. When we are in accord with the will of God, we are in accord with the self-denial of the evil that is within us and the self-affirmation of the good that is within us. When we are in accord with the will of God, we are incorporated into the life of Christ, of whom it is eternally said, "He lives. He is risen."

Yet even as identification with the Crucified One is the object of our faith, the resurrection of Christ as the Glorified One is the object of our hope. "Good Friday is D-day, but Easter is V-day."⁵¹ This provides the context of the Christian hope. There is no other. It was Christianity which taught the world to hope--to look to the future

⁵¹Emil Brunner, Faith, Hope, and Love (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 103.

for the true meaning of life. There is no improving on the statement of Paul: "Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15:12).

IV. THE AFTERLIFE AS MORE THAN MERE CONTINUANCE

Let us concede the possibility of a spiritual body. Let us concede that looking to the future need not distract one from the present struggle; that men yearn for a future life; that God has given man more time for movement toward moral perfection and toward self-fulfillment. Let us concede that the Biblical evidence and the final revelation in Christ validate the hope for life after death.

What assurance have we that this extended existence gives ground for hope? How do we know that this future life is to be accepted as a blessing? How do we know that it transcends the quality of tediousness in the present? How do we know that it is more than mere endurance?

The Christian hope of eternal life differs from the Indian view of eternal recurrence. Cyclic time is not Christian time. The people of India and surrounding lands hold to a belief in the transmigration or rebirth of the soul as a method of purifying it from former sins in an endless "wheel of existence." This Indian philosophy of mere continuance is so unbearable that it has given rise

to an intense yearning for extinction of the personality in Nirvana. The inadequacy of even this small improvement on the Law of Karma is shown by the simultaneous tendency to regard Nirvana as more than mere annihilation, but as blissful union with the divine.

The Greeks believed that at the end of infrequent cosmic periods, the universal conflagration caused the soul to return to the divine home from which it came. Yet the new cycle, even with its new beginning, reproduced exactly what preceded it. The soul shared the same existence in the same bodies composed of the same elements. The most adequate proof of the inadequacy of this sameness is that the true Stoic hope is that the soul, as fleeting energy detached from the All, will enter into the All once more, finally. This is the great virtue taught by Stoicism -- submission to the fatality which overhangs all, joyous acceptance of the inevitable. Thus, all comes to rest.

There is rest in the Eastern extinction of personality, but there is movement and growth in the Christian confrontation through communion. "If death means rest . . . death is final."⁵² Therefore, Christian death must mean passage to another type of effort, to another direction, to a more ample world, as per the

⁵² William Ernest Hocking, Thoughts on Death and Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 95.

promises contained in Scripture. The Christian believes that life everlasting as a portion of eternal life is a new and higher life.

Perhaps Kant was the most important of those to shift the conception of Heaven from a place of fruition and rest to one of endless prolongation of our present moral struggle between duty and inclination. The mistake of the earlier fathers was equating fruition with mere passivity. Baillie has observed that Kant's development is not a development toward fruition but a development in fruition.⁵³ The heavenly life will always afford ample room for aspiration toward the moral life. As noted earlier, Kant would find activity in the infinite growth toward the moral objective, the growth that continues even after death. This provides the assurance of variety in existence.

Christianity was not the first to point to the discontinuity between the present existence and the future existence. Eternal recurrence and timelessness had built-in inadequacies which the Egyptians religiously eschewed. Their abhorrence of a mere extension on another plane of the conditions of the present often forced them into fantasyland. The Egyptians were the first to develop the

⁵³ John Baillie, op. cit., p. 230.

doctrine of the immortality of the soul.⁵⁴ The "Book of the Dead," developed over the course of centuries, was to be recited or used as the means of protection or salvation of the soul of the dead. By emulating Osiris, the soul was admitted into the fields of Alu. Here the existence parallels that of the Islamic picture of Heaven: the blessed toiler enjoys a life without pain or death, an abundant harvest, with six-ells-high stalks of corn under an eternal sunshine and mild zephyr winds.⁵⁵ Here is the low form of belief. It expresses a desire for the opposite of whatever travail happens to afflict one while on earth. It is almost the childish vision of a garden of candy flowers. When the bewildered soul loses its moorings in the harshness of reality, it often transfers its frustrations into a fantasy realizable in the future.

Yet there does seem justification for supposing that the afterlife is a new and higher form of life than the one we presently know. There seems justification for believing that we have not yet been initiated into life in its fullest manifestations. Luckock asks,

Would not our Lord have been guilty of the most flagrant deceit had He promised Paradise to the dying thief, when He realized that the continuance of earthly

⁵⁴ Kaufmann Kohler, Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion (New York: MacMillan, 1923), pp. 18-19.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

misery was all that he might expect with Him?⁵⁶

Why does Paul exult? What gain is it for him "to die," if death is not the passing from the realization of the divine fellowship to the consummation of the same in bliss? The "bliss" defies imagination, and speculation concerning its nature is the pastime of spiritual day-dreams; but bliss undoubtedly negates sameness and boredom --else it would not be bliss. Variety remains for most an unmitigated blessing, greatly to be desired.

If one admits that conscious life exists after death, one seems forced to admit that it undergoes some kind of change. Conscious life, by its very definition, involves progress or retrogression, growth or decay. If the soul has not been made perfect in this world, we may suppose that the continued operations of God's Spirit will continue to alter the imperfect soul. Here we have not only change which prevents stagnation, but also the hope of perfection which negates the imperfection of sameness.

Christian immortality indeed transcends mere persistence; there is no necessary value in endless living. The quality of the life is what matters. We may reasonably assume that the life to come will perpetuate those qualities which are admittedly of highest value in the

⁵⁶Herbert Mortimer Luckock, After Death (London: Longman's, Green, 1894), pp. 30-32.

earthly sphere. That is, we may anticipate the enrichment of personality. This occurs primarily in the highest realm of spiritual fellowship. Lord speaks of love, fellowship, and mutual service as forming essential qualities for the Christian both here and hereafter.⁵⁷ The primary implication is that the life to come is one of progress, progress as we enter more fully into divine fellowship. Jesus regarded the Kingdom of God as a new and higher type of life. His answer to the unbelieving Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27 reveals that any thoughts such as whose wife a multi-married woman will be displayed rank misunderstanding.

But what is the precise nature of this higher life? The New Testament is chary of describing that which is apparently ineffable. The word "hope" appears in the Pauline epistles at least 40 times, but the nature of the fulfillment of this hope is not dwelt upon. Even Revelation, which deals most uniquely of all the Books with such matters, does not attempt overly to describe what defies imagination. The traditional longing for the vision of God is possibly the most inclusive description we can muster. John Knox's description of this vision affirms that it shall satisfy all our requirements for

⁵⁷ F. Townley Lord, Conquest of Death (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), p. 34.

meaningful existence--it is "a possessing and a being possessed, a knowing and a being known, which will fill our divided and partial existence with meaning and substance."⁵⁸

With Martin Luther, the Kingdom of God meant believing in Jesus Christ.⁵⁹ In this Kingdom, He is the only king. The sojourner in this Kingdom cannot be harmed by any sin, death, or misfortune; he has eternal life, joy, and salvation. Eternal perfection marks the fulfillment of this faith. Such fulfillment will be revealed on the Last Day. Meanwhile, the difficult business of manifesting "the righteousness of God" brings only punishment and violence on earth; but the reward is to be found not upon earth but in Heaven (Luke 6:23). Meanwhile, we have the assurance of the necessities of life in the promise, "If you seek the Kingdom of God first, then all these things shall be yours as well."

"I cannot think what we shall do in heaven," mused Martin Luther in Table Talk.⁶⁰ "No change, no work, no eating, no drinking, nothing to do. I suppose there will

⁵⁸ John Knox, Christ and the Hope of Glory (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 54.

⁵⁹ Martin Luther, Works (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), XXI, 204.

⁶⁰ Roland H. Bainton, "Table Talk," as appearing in Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (New York: New American Library, 1950), p. 231.

be plenty to see." "Yes," said Melanchthon, "'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.'" "Why, of course," responded Luther, "that sight will give us quite enough to do."

Luther and Melanchthon are merely reflecting the prevalent view that the Beatific Vision is sufficient unto itself. Saint Ambrose borrowed from the pseudo-Esdras a description of the celestial dwelling as everlasting fecility. The sufferings and wanderings of this world will be ended. The soul, having walked in the way of God, "will rest in seven orders of rewards."⁶¹ The seventh order is that stage in which the soul wins to the sight of God. The bliss of this celestial beatitude is participation by reason in the only wisdom, spending the rest of time in contemplation of what is most beautiful. Many have been the variations of this medieval conception of the Beatific Vision of the splendor of God. Coarse beliefs have mitigated the aura of expectancy; but in its pure form, the expectation could lift the intellectual, Plotinus, to summits that made reason to swoon. Here he could imagine the perfection of eternal happiness.

From the Christian view, any conjecture on the quality of life beyond the grave must be based upon the renowned faithfulness and righteousness of God. God's

⁶¹ IV Esdras, VII, 91; VIII, 95.

faithfulness implies His dependability and worthiness of belief; God's righteousness implies not only His doing right, but His making right. The perception of these two attributes lies within man's memory, the chief recording of which is the Old and New Testaments. Similarly, perception lies within personal experience for those whose will is open to receive it. The predictability of God's action in the future, then, may be based not only on the recorded covenantal promises, but also upon personal observation of His deeds in the past. Both Scripture and personal experience witness that life with God is bliss. Those who live in Christ may thus be heartened. They experience already a foretaste of Heaven.

Heaven is properly thought of not as a place, but as a quality of life. The whole creation groans after this "quality of life" and flounders without a hope for its fulfillment in an eon transcending the present. The life here and the life yonder represent the same source, the same eternity--it is the difference between the seed and the full-grown plant. Heaven is the completion of what Jesus began here.

St. John relates that eternal life is "the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ." Viewed in this respect it is qualitative. It differs from the highest kind of life on earth in degree rather than kind, for we have seen that eternal life has already begun. Perfect

identification with God through the Way revealed in Jesus Christ is the ideal; to speak of the highest kind of life on earth (not the average) is to speak of the life determined by the standard of Christ. Now Heaven might possibly be equated with this temporal existence, (as many modern people see fit to do), if humanity lived according to the highest standard set by Christ. But, admittedly, we fall short of the standards. This disparity between the highest ideal and the actual practice can hardly be called Heaven. Heaven, then, represents the full consummation of life with God.

But the Christian life transcends mere endurance while awaiting a reward in Heaven. As Heaven is sharing in the life of Christ, being resurrected with Christ, living, suffering, and dying with Christ, means that we are now in Heaven with Him. Death merely marks another step on the road to closer companionship with Him. Further, Heaven becomes a mere bribe when we think of it as the reward for "being good." It is rather childish to externalize the things we covet in our earthly existence--peace, ease, security--as being the composites of Heaven. Such spiritual infantilism propels us toward hell, not Heaven.

Our proper attitude is to do all that is commanded us, and then to confess our unworthiness. Such an attitude gives the assurance that one is willing to forsake all for

Christ, that one "will receive a hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come eternal life" (Matt. 19:29).

Confidence in our own works is contrary to faith; confidence in our own works is contrary to hope. The hope for life is intended to bring consolation to believers through confidence in God's promise. The promise is intended not to present an incentive for a reward, but comfort during the persecution suffered for Christ's sake. Salvation is initiated with God, not man.

In stressing that everlasting life is more than mere continuance, we are emphasizing strongly that it is also more than personal happiness. God's will overrides any egoistic human concern for reward or happiness. No finite being is deserving of reward, though the promise of the same brings comfort to those of humble spirit. Happiness, being such a fleeting entity, is hardly adequate to convey a description of God's Kingdom as other than a momentary delight which threatens to become pure boredom. Besides, our hope for personal blessedness is not substantiated by the New Testament witness. The New Testament has not a single word for "blessedness." What is central is not the happiness of man, but the realization of the will of God. Eternal life is best viewed from the standpoint of God, not man. Religion is not primarily interested in the indestructibility of the finite, but in the fellowship of the Infinite.

The end of the ways of God is the glory of God, not the blessedness of man. But satisfaction accrues to man because the realization of God's purpose is bliss to a God-centered man. Of course, to speak of satisfaction in the will of God is but meaningless chatter to any one whose being is not oriented towards God. To those who stand firmly within the faith, the will of God is of the essence. Viewed in this light, everlasting life is more than personal happiness. Viewed in any light, eternal life transcends mere endurance.

CHAPTER VI

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PARISH MINISTRY

The afterlife is a reality. It is necessary for the fullness of meaning during earthly life. Therefore, it does not conflict with life this side of the grave; it conditions temporal life by placing it under the expectancy of the fulfillment which only God can give. Because of our view of the nature of God as a living God and a God of love, we are certain that the afterlife will be eventful and joyful, as God continues to move in us to perfect our wills.

This is our hope, and we have assurance in this hope, because it is grounded in God. When God seems deaf to our mortal cries for help, we may take courage. We may still our voices and our fears by knowing that God is always a God who comes. He is a God of the future, too. This is His promise to us.

When faith grows weak and hope grows dim, we may seek refuge in the sanctuary of God's promise. This is the sanctuary of the Church.

I. THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH

The Church remains for the believer the ultimate ray of hope. When the Church fulfills its mission, it stands as a beacon light for souls adrift from their anchorage in

reality. As the ultimate reality is God, the Church faces the task of interpreting God to the inquisitive mind of the seeker after truth. Now if the worshiper questions at all, he ultimately inquires concerning God's future and how it relates to him. The concern is not altogether egocentric. Simple curiosity is often the motive for asking. God promises us eternal joy, and yet our hearts are filled with temporal sorrow. He promises to be the bread of life, and yet we agonize in mortal hunger. Where would we be without hope?

Yet in this is the mystery: though this question of hope remains of great importance, it is muted in the city church of this generation. There is a present and direct relation between the degree of worldly sophistication and the lack of voiced concern regarding an afterlife. It is often made a tenet of "fundamental" religion and thus placed under the stigma of taboo. When the question is finally forced upon the attention of more "knowledgeable" believers, it assumes such an abstract form that its essence is hardly recognizable. The situation of worshipers being engrossed in the triviality of a potluck supper, while being totally indifferent to an aspect of eternal life, is almost ludicrous. It borders on rank artificiality. We wonder if there is not a calculated indifference to the subject.

Most believers have asked the question, although

apologetically, Why have a doctrine of holiness at all? What does it profit? The answer to this honest question is often the syrupy statement of one who knows neither the nature of people nor of God: "Virtue is its own reward." Fosdick has fielded the "virtue is its own reward" cliché with the demanding inquiry, "For whom?" The cry of dereliction by Jesus was a grave indication of the possible "reward" of virtue. Christ was the essence of virtue; yet, in the end, He did not feel any self-fulfillment in His seeming abandonment by God. So it is with the masses: the Cross of Christ with its aloneness is so often the picture of the reward of virtue that the event of the resurrection is required to counterbalance it. When a person suffers for the right, he instinctively looks to a future vindication.

The parishioner wants to know about God's future. The happy-go-lucky may pretend indifference, but time has answered the "I'm not concerned" of this bon vivant by placing him beside the deathbed of a loved one. In the presence of life, we may be indifferent toward death; but in the presence of death, we are forever different toward life. Intelligent investigation reveals that deprived of the hope for the afterlife the present life is robbed of its intended meaning.

Gabriel Vahanian complains that the salt of

Christianity has lost its savor.¹ He states: "Christianity has become so this-worldly that, perhaps, it has lost heaven and this world, too."² Emil Brunner is even more blunt than Vahanian: "A church which has nothing to teach concerning the future and the life of the world to come is bankrupt."³ Apparently, we have come a long way from the conditions that led Montesquieu to exclaim grudgingly: "Admirable thing! The Christian religion, which seems to have no purpose other than felicity in the afterlife, still makes our happiness in this life."⁴

Montesquieu failed to see that the happiness of the one is dependent upon the hope of the other. The Church often fails to see that its foundation is faith, but its steeple is hope. The towering structure of hope is the most singularly visible feature in distinguishing the tabernacle of God from the dwellings of men. Does the Church offer the fellowship of its members as that which makes it unique? Hardly. The social fraternities offer a fellowship which often puts the Church to shame. Seldom do

¹Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God (New York: George Braziller, 1961).

²Ibid., p. 48.

³Emil Brunner, Eternal Hope (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 219.

⁴Montesquieu, De l'esprit des lois, XXIV, p. 407, cited by Vahanian, op. cit., p. 144.

we note hearty inspiration (or even participation) when the saints sing, "The Church's one foundation." But let the melodious strains of "Dear Old Sigma Chi" ring out, and the atmosphere is saturated with reverence.

The tower of hope is that which points men to the Church. Fellowship is cheap. Youth organizations are wholesale. Counseling is purchasable. Book reviews are a dime a dozen. But hope is priceless.

"Hast thou hope?" they asked of John Knox when he lay dying. He spoke nothing, but raised his finger and pointed upwards, and so died.

Can modern man point to the Church? Fellowship programs, youth organizations, counseling services, book reviews--these are integral to the life of the Church; but unless they stand under the shadow of the structure of hope, they shall surely fall. Isn't it ridiculous to speak of the spire as that which supports the building? Yet that's the way it is with the Christian hope. The medieval spire reached to heaven with an optimism and expectancy completely out of accord with the poverty and disease at its base. Yet those who lived in the midst of such squalor could lift their eyes to refresh their expectancy that tomorrow--God's tomorrow--would certainly be better. The temple of God with its foundation in their hearts was held together by the tower of hope.

What has happened to hope within the Church?

Why has the promise of life been moved from a hope based in God to a hope based in man? Why do the troubled seek out the darkened barrooms, the security of conformity, the sedative of suicide, instead of the ground of the immortal promise: "Because I live you shall live also."

Is it that men sense that the Church refuses to be held responsible for these words?

Pity the Church which offers no hope. Pity the Church which announces that all of life is rushing to a nihilating wall of death. This is madness. This is sheer madness, aggravated by the fact that the Church not only participates in the lie, but fosters it.

There is hope. There is life. There is love, God's love. "O love that wilt not let me go" is the triumphant refrain which the Church can sing. "Not even at death" is the implied addendum. Who shall deprive a pilgrim of this mecca? God help us, let it not be the Church.

II. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LIFE

If the grace of God is the sole agency for granting continued life, we can never presume to say what kind of life is acceptable to God for the granting of this gift. Yet we know that the grace of God is not without its demands. This statement does not imply that God's love is conditional upon the fulfillment of requirements by men.

It merely implies that God has standards of conduct and morality which He Himself would fulfill through us, if we would but allow Him. God's grace, then, is conditional upon Himself. It is conditional upon man only as man refuses to accept it.

To refuse to accept God's grace is to experience judgment. The man who cuts himself adrift from God subjects himself to the terrors of being alone in an unfriendly world. The minister has a duty to this man. Duty propels the minister to state that the choice is between God's grace and God's judgment, between hope and terror.

The terror does not originate in God. We call it God's judgment, because it is the consequence of disobedience of God's just demands. These demands are intended for the good of man; that is, they are the guidelines to maintain order in the midst of chaos. Who would voluntarily submit himself to chaos? Obviously, many would, or else evil would not be so prevalent. But the minister justifies his calling only in proclaiming to all that we stand under the necessity for wise decision if we are to live meaningfully.

How does the afterlife enter consideration? The answer is that even as we stand under God's eternal grace, so do we stand under God's eternal demands. If life with God is heaven, if heaven is eternal, then we may hope for

an eternal paradise with God. On the other hand, if life without God is hell, if hell represents God's eternal judgment on sin, then what may we conclude regarding the eternal fate of the eternal sinner?

We must reply with all honesty that we do not know. Yet we know with great certainty that some form of reckoning calls every man to account. The tribunal of God's loving justice meets in continual session. The wrong-doer has every right to know this. He has every reason to expect that the minister will speak to him of the urgency of his decision. "Choose this day whom you will serve." If the possibility exists that a soul may be lost, all of heaven rejoices when the lost sheep decides, "As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord."

Judgment. Is it ever proper to preach judgment? Those who reply No have only to point to the mass of evidence showing the destructiveness which the "hellfire and brimstone" mentality has wrought. The God of terror has created lines leading to the offices of psychiatrists. He has caused murder, suicide, and genocide. He has spurred the present revolt against placing any but minimal demands upon "tender psyches." In many quarters, the God of Terror is dead. Long may he lie.

But what has been the reverse action? We are faced now with the picture of a harmless old grandfather deity,

who dispenses love so freely that even the devil gorges on it. Children are taught that he is their "friend," just like the milkman and the policeman on the beat. He is so well "loved" that his disciples are willing to impeach the magistrates who decide that prayer to him is a thing of private conscience. He blesses everything from the dedication of a battleship that leads to war to the opening of a freeway that leads to death. Everybody loves him. He is "the man upstairs." He is "a living doll."

The recent revolt against this picture of deity has included such men as K. Morgan Edwards of Claremont. Many of his students are attempting to assess the role of judgment in its relation to the grace of God. They are attempting to recapture the Wesleyan emphasis on the grace of God as inclusive of God's moral demands for men. Their explorations are far from finished, but every thinking person will concede that the major emphasis is a worthy one.

To this student, it is evident that at least two reasons prompt the preaching of God's judgment: first, people need to be made aware of the consequences of disobeying God; and secondly, lacking a healthy reverence, people tend to become contemptuous and morally insincere.

The consequences of disobeying God are evident in all of life. Disobeying God means living inharmoniously with the will of God, pursuing life in reckless disregard

of the rules established by God. The will of God is that men should conduct themselves in a way that would testify to His presence within them. That men have done just the opposite is evidenced by two world wars, the threat of nuclear destruction, the mass craving for violence, the oppression of human freedom, the dissolution of family ties, and the flagrant abuse of honorable practices.

Will preaching God's demands alter this situation? With a murder being committed every hour in the United States, will proclaiming judgment stay the killer's hand?

Who is to say? Perhaps the demonic in men will always keep life in turmoil. But this we know--if the Church does not make a courageous witness, then the Church itself is demonic. Perhaps the Church will not be heard as it cries out the wrath of God; but unless it does cry out, it cannot legitimately call itself an instrument of God. "How will they hear unless a preacher tells them?" A certain group of men will never heed the voice of warning. God alone is sufficient unto these. But what of that one soul who would hear and respond; what is the Church's responsibility to him? It is to say in unequivocal terms that God has expectations of man. God is not pleased when man fails to fulfill His expectations.

Knowing that God has limitations of tolerance may well restore some of the challenge to life. Living in accord with the moral law can vanquish much of the present

boredom by giving a person something to strive for. The pressing boredom of modern western culture is a supreme manifestation of the lack of orientation to a purposeful goal. The goal, in this instance, would be the dedicated quest for the life of service which alone fulfills the spirit of the moral law.

Paul Elmen, in describing the boredom of our time, marvels at the inability of religion to fulfill its historic role of banishing ennui. The old-fashioned concept of the world as an arena, the belief in Providence, the conviction that a life after death existed, redeemed whatever monotony may be encountered on earth. Presently, the Church seeks only to divert parishioners. "As though there were anything more exciting than the news that a human being can be accepted by God."⁵

The second reason for preaching the moral law is that it safeguards the distance between God and man, preventing the finite familiarity which so often leads to contempt. At the same time, the moral law aids one in remaining morally earnest. The instrument for keeping man humble is proper reverence. Reverence necessarily includes mystery. As rational beings always maintain a healthy fear of that which is mysterious, as a healthy fear is

⁵Paul Elmen, The Restoration of Meaning to Contemporary Life (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 60.

strong incentive for obedience, the moral law safeguards obedience through fear.

The use of fear is a delicate issue. The negative consequences of fear are often more destructive than the actions which prompted the use of fear in the first place. But we have spoken of a healthy fear, a reverence. To fear the Lord is to realize that His long-suffering has its end. To fear the Lord is to conduct oneself as if expecting to be called to a reckoning.

The fear of a reckoning often induces responsible action. Amos, Hosea, Micah, and the host of prophets who have succeeded them cannot be dismissed as mere whistlers in the wind. Even if their admonitions went unheeded during their time, succeeding generations have drawn upon them to fashion courses of conduct.

Lacking a calling to account, persons are prone to act in the same irresponsible manner that led Paul to exclaim of the resurrection: "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" The tendency to nihilism is always present among those who deny the possibility of a resurrection like that of Christ's. It does little good to speak of what people "ought" to do, lacking a reckoning. The simple fact is that a healthy fear helps to keep us in check.

An unhealthy fear can have the opposite effect. Consider, for instance, the fear experienced by those who

refuse to believe in the afterlife. Theirs is a panic fear of the end that forces them to crowd into a short existence material goods, pleasure, and the fame of empire. Thus, our overemphasis on technology is really the effect, not the cause of the loss of the solid foundation of life. The cause is a failure to acknowledge that those who have made material goods, pleasure, and power their gods will be called upon to answer how these advanced the service of God's Kingdom. In a manner of speaking, they are being questioned daily. Shouldn't the minister say this?

If promise and fulfillment are to be sought and found within this world without the surety of the resurrection, then the Christian has the right to ask why he does not know fulfillment here and now. If the worldly hope of the fulfillment of meaning is a delusion, then the wise are correct in refusing to embrace it. Reverence for God prevents their reverencing idols of clay.

Ralph Sockman, during an illustrious career of radio preaching and shepherding among others Christ Church, must have answered hundreds of questions concerning man's future in God. He has concluded that death is far too abrupt to mark either the beginning of the new life or the ending of the old: new life comes by degree and not by physical suddenness. "The Christian victory does not begin at death, but it requires eternity to complete

it."⁶ The Christian victory begins in the triumph of the ideals for which the Church allegedly stands. When the churchman understands that his present four score years are forming a pattern which is intended to endure, perhaps he will be motivated to form enduring habits. When he understands that he is to be called ultimately before the judgment seat of God, he may conduct his life accordingly. He may--and he may not. His reactions remain his own. The minister's function is to tell him that he stands under the judgment both now and in the future. To fail to tell him, even to warn him as strongly as sound preaching will allow, is the most abject dereliction of calling.

It may be remarked that this is a negative approach. Well, there are few things more negative than the present meaninglessness which has resulted from man's loss of a future hope. We do not advocate a negative fighting a negative; at least we do not advocate this in isolation. When united with the positive aspect of God's redemptive and loving grace, the "negative" aspect of God's wrathful judgment is incentive enough for any man of sense to be about his Father's business. The Church will never be the congregation of the hollow-eyed when doing the business of God.

⁶Ralph W. Sockman, The Paradoxes of Jesus (New York: Abingdon Press, 1936), p. 249.

Grace. The preaching of judgment is justified only through the preaching of grace. If there is possibly a greater imperative than the need to preach the moral law, it is the imperative to preach the healing grace of God. As a matter of fact, for those who accept the Wesleyan dictum and the current research on the subject, one never preaches wrath without preaching love. If a formula for preaching can possibly be established, it will be one which moves from grace to judgment to grace.

Grace is alpha and omega, the first and the last word to be said in any discussion about God. "Twas grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me on." Grace is the reason for the afterlife. Grace is the reason for any life. The love of God is what nurtures a child long before he utters a word of supplication. The love of God is what calls the old man home, long after he has despaired of ever reaching the mark.

The greatest testimony to the love of God was the giving of His unique son in the glorious tragedy of the Cross. Here was the supreme instance of grace taking precedence over judgment. The judgment of God would say that the sinner suffers the consequences of his own actions; but the grace of God is shown in His taking the consequences of our sin upon Himself.

Because the power of sin is undone, some men say that the need for preaching judgment is ended, that hope

through love is the formula. What they fail to understand is that the Cross cannot be separated from the resurrection. The law cannot be separated from grace. Judgment cannot be separated from love. Hope through love eliminates any responsibility that man might have. To be steadfast in this love is to wait resolutely upon the Lord to act. To be steadfast in the moral law is for man to act resolutely through the grace of God.

Man is responsible. This is all that makes him man. Man must be responsible. This is all that God demands. The miracle of grace allows man to act responsibly, if he will only accept its empowering strength. The love of God is the strongest of all motives for dedicated living. Fear has power, but it lacks the staying power of love.

No, judgment alone creates the tyrant God, whose presence fills life with terror. Grace alone creates the impotent God, whose presence fills life with permissiveness. Under the promise of the hope for life, both judgment and grace combine to provide wholesome guidelines in the experience of life.

III. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DEATH

If death is not the ultimate test of our faith, it is at least the most dramatic. That is, the promise of the afterlife has significance for the whole of life, but it is in actual death that the promise is most acutely

focused. A case in point is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, imprisoned in Germany because of his dedicated resistance to the Nazi regime, and hanged in April, 1945. Bonhoeffer has concluded that the constant knowledge that any moment one might be snatched from life destroys whatever romantic attraction, whatever meaning one might formerly have sought through the medium of danger. Yet living under the threat of death does not necessarily move a person to hate death. What is important is the spirit in which we face it. On the day prior to his hanging, this great teacher, preacher, and author confided to Payne Best, an English officer, "This is the end, for me the beginning of life."⁷ He was but mirroring a whole life of confidence in God, the confidence of a prayer penned for fellow prisoners:

. . . Whether I live or die, I am with thee,
and thou art with me, my God.⁸

Bonhoeffer might have been addressing himself to the Church in the sickness of its spiritual witness. The disease is a lack of orientation. The cure is a purposeful movement to a rediscovery of God's will for man. It is the will of God that men should live, and love, and serve--eternally. Harry Emerson Fosdick was right: "To talk about the fatherhood of a God, who begets children only to

⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison (London: SCM Press, 1953), p. 12.

⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

annihilate them, is absurd."⁹ God has promised us no such absurdity. We have promised this to ourselves. If the pendulum is to reverse its motion, then we aspirants to the highest calling must intelligently, intellectually, and intensely present the authentic promise of our God of life. We must teach men how to hope once more. In the poverty of our predicament we can do no more. In the grace of our God we can do no less.

Judgment belongs to God. What can be said in the funeral sermon about a man who in life was an unmitigated scoundrel? The practice is still common among some ministers to use such occasions of grief to whip recalcitrants into line. The intent is obviously worthy, for the living are those who must hear the words of the sermon. Yet two factors weigh heavily against such a course of action: the situation of the family's grief; and the fact that death itself is the judgment upon sin.

The sorrow of death is the memory of life. The loved ones who mourn the deceased are remembering him during the high points of his life. They are remembering him at a time of innocence, at a time of joy, at a time when he was spiritually alive. They are possibly aware of his detour from God and need little rehearsal of the ruin

⁹Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Assurance of Immortality (New York: Association Press, 1918), p. 100.

he has caused. Judgment, at a time like this, is hardly necessary.

Death itself is the dramatization of judgment. This is why the minister is relieved of that task. Death is the judgment before which we all must stand. Thus, the judgment belongs to God, and each of us must confess himself a sinner deserving of death.

It is the grace of God which grants to us the resurrection to life. Death is a time to hold up God's grace, not man's limited judgments. The grace of God mediates forgiveness; the judgments of men mediate condemnation. The minister has a responsibility to mediate God's loving forgiveness to the living. The words of assurance may bring the comfort which no other words could give.

Yet the death of a supremely virtuous man may be an occasion for holding up virtue itself. This is the same as holding up the grace of God. One who has lived meaningfully in God gives the inference that he has died in the same manner. His life and death may point the way to the fullness of meaning for others.

As for the sinner who dies unrepentant, even for him death may not be the end. The Gospels may rightly be interpreted to reveal that the opportunity for virtue does not end with this life. There are three predominant themes in conceptions of the fate of individuals and

salvation: (1) conditional immortality, in which one receives in proportion to his present life; the wicked are totally annihilated; (2) eternal punishment for the wicked in a place of God's choosing; (3) universal restoration, in which every soul comes to rest in God.

There is adequate argumentation for justification for belief in any of the three. The essential point is that the grace of God in addition to a conscious effort of the human will and prayer rightly conceived place one so closely in harmony with the will of God that he is above apprehension concerning his personal destiny. This assurance, in turn, allows him to work effectively for the salvation of others, both by word and by deed. The assurance of salvation entails the assurance of everlasting life.

Even the supporters of conditionalism (one's fate as dependent upon his previous moral life) would not maintain that the recalcitrant receives at once the penalties of evil, and at once ceases to be. Ultimately, those who have said No to God may have the opportunity of saying Yes. The greater hope to spring from the Christian heart is that every life may eventually learn true meaning in God. There is no assurance, and this prevents presumption. Yet there is no stated finality, and this allows hope. What is important is that the message be proclaimed that the God of life offers every man the ultimate in meaningful existence

through grasping the message that GOD WILL NOT LEAVE US IN THE DUST.

Comfort belongs to the minister. To bring comfort during life and to bring comfort during death is one of the glories of the ministry. If the preacher achieves any success in making life and death more meaningful, it is because God's Spirit is working through him, directing, sustaining, healing. When he responds to God's Spirit, he gains the assurance of eternal life. He may bring comfort with great conviction.

The loss of faith in eternal life can ultimately destroy the human person. He is torn asunder through his own reservations concerning the divine promise. Hope, when used with reservation, is not truly hope. It merely reflects despair. The resurrection of Christ forms the note of hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Ekklesia would not have come into existence had it not been for the Easter occurrence. The Jesus-event would merely have faded from history. The life of the believer is itself resurrection. At the same time, it is only expectation of resurrection.¹⁰

This remains one of the primary messages of the

¹⁰ Emil Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 412.

Church, if not the primary message, during grief work. In reply to the question, "What has happened to him?" the Christian faith replies, "He lives." The body has played its part. Its strengths and weaknesses may have pulled the spirit in opposing directions; but the temporal phase is at an end. The spirit, now cloaked in survival gear more befitting its new realm, carries on its imperishable qualities in that existence beyond the grave. To those who mourn wartime casualties, to those who grieve over the innocents who die prematurely, we may say that nothing of the fine quality is lost.

What we are concerned with is the commanding motive of the minister, that which Phillips Brooks calls "the realized value of the human soul." The minister is intensely concerned with people at their deepest level of need. He never dims hope or optimism merely to prevent people from calling him childish. He understands along with Phillips Brooks that immortality touches and conditions every aspect of life.¹¹ No parishioner is totally insensitive to it, and most seek some measure of confirmation from their minister. At the deepest level of need, men require assurance that their most treasured values will be preserved. Instinctively, they know that

¹¹Phillips Brooks, The Purpose and Use of Comfort and Other Sermons (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1910), p. 225.

if these values are converted into dust, then there is little point to talk of "laying up treasures in heaven." The "quality of life" argument, the assumption that fulfillment can accrue in a worthy existence in the present, must surely have been penned by young men confirmed in the immortality of their youth and strength.

It is often true that we modern preachers are hardly the best advertisements for the Christian faith. We are so busy mirroring society that we cannot shape it. We have our gospel, but do not use it. We have the totality of meaning, yet allow the partiality of meaninglessness to overcome us. Leslie Weatherhead, during a time when the bombs were falling on London, wrote a rousing call to battle entitled, "This is the Victory."¹² It expresses hope, determination, and confidence in God's will for mankind. Even greater than the "total warfare" in which man periodically finds himself is the larger program of God. "If we knew a cure for cancer, shouldn't we tell the good news to those in the toils of the disease?"¹³

In a more literal adaptation of the malaise afflicting humanity, K. Morgan Edwards ("More Than

¹² Leslie D. Weatherhead, This Is the Victory (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941).

¹³ Ibid., p. 247.

Survival")¹⁴ relates the case of his pastoral visitations with a man dying of cancer. The man ultimately came to accept his condition: "One of these days this will strike a vital organ and that will be the end." From this point the man was led to muse: "Let's talk about what happens after that." This is the predicament in which we find ourselves--What's next? It is not that we irresponsibly parrot "life after death" for every disease known to mankind. It is merely and supremely that we tell the good news that ours is a God who is concerned. How futile would have been any arguments from Dr. Edwards concerning an immortality through the man's sons, or through the endeavors he had only partially completed, or through the influence which he had wielded. When the dying man is serene in the knowledge that his God cares for him even after death, then he is logically led to the conclusion that God watches over him in life. We are dying daily. It is this watchfulness which counteracts the insecurity we commonly feel in this age which has lost its moorings in God.

It is a wonderful thing when a man has courage to face the inevitable problems of life--to see the truth about disease and death and to seek the truth which continues beyond death. He comes to know

¹⁴K. Morgan Edwards, More Than Survival: The Need for a Moral and Spiritual Revolution (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 46.

that no matter how long his body lasts, it is but a temporary habitation of the soul.¹⁵

May the parish minister always have the wisdom, the courage, and the love to make more meaningful the lives of his people through the affirmation of the Christian hope.

¹⁵Ibid.

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